**Risk assessment tool for a planned reunification**

**Relationships**

*Consider information on the parent/child relationship, quality of attachment, feedback regarding contact, quality of other family relationship. Will any work be needed to support the child and parent to rebuild relationships?*

Clear strength Baseline/adequate Serious concern

**Views on reunification**

*Consider the views of the parent, child and other family members and those of the professional network; is there any ambivalence to the return on the part of the child, parent or other family member; will this have a negative impact on the return?*

Clear strength Baseline/adequate Serious concern

**Child’s safety**

*Consider any risks to the child within the family and the community; are the risks that led to the child being accommodated still present, for example an abuser still living in the household or still in contact with the family; does the child pose a risk to themselves through their behaviour?*

Clear strength Baseline/adequate Serious concern

**Parenting capacity**

*Consider all aspects of parenting capacity and any attributes or difficulties that may affect parenting capacity.*

Clear strength Baseline/adequate Serious concern

**Resolution of past difficulties**

*Consider the extent to which the issues that caused a risk of harm to the child have been resolved or in the process of being resolved; is the parent engaging with relevant services; has change been affected to the level required; are any such changes sustainable; what are the chances of a relapse or return to previous behaviours?*

Clear strength Baseline/adequate Serious concern

**Suitability of household**

*Consider whether the home offers a safe physical and nurturing environment for the child; has the composition of the household changed since the child last lived there: do household members or visitors to the home present a risk to the child; is the tenure of the home secure; is there any current or historical domestic abuse?*

Clear strength Baseline/adequate Serious concern

**Readiness for reunification**

*Consider the progress made by parents in addressing issues, the level of need presented by the child and the extent to which required changes have been achieved; does the current situation at home continue to pose a risk to the child; what are the chances of the child returning to the care system if reunification is implemented at this time; can a successful reunification be achieved in a time-scale that is right for the child?*

Clear strength Baseline/adequate Serious concern

**Multi-agency support**

*Consider the level of support that the family are likely to receive from the professional network; how strong is the professional network; is the child returning from an out of borough placement; does the child need to access universal services; are the services the child and family will need available?*

Clear strength Baseline/adequate Serious concern

**Levels of risk from reunification**

Once the reunification risk assessment has been carried out, social workers should identify and record the level and nature of the risk should the child return home. Risk from reunification may be classified in the following way:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Low risk indicators** | **Evidence** |
| * No risk factors apparent or previous risk factors fully addressed. * Protective factors apparent. * Evidence of parental capacity to sustain change. * Parents and child both want return home to take place. |  |
| **Medium risk indicators** | **Evidence** |
| * Risk factors apparent or not all risk factors addressed. * At least one protective factor apparent. * Evidence of parental capacity to sustain change. * Parents and child both want return home to take place. |  |
| **High risk indicators** | **Evidence** |
| * Risk factors apparent and not being addressed. * At least one protective factor apparent. * No or limited evidence of parental capacity to change. * Ambivalence or opposition to return home by child or parent. |  |
| **Severe risk indicator** | **Evidence** |
| * Risk factors apparent and not being addressed. * No protective factors apparent. * No evidence of parental capacity to change. * Ambivalence or opposition to return home by child or parent. |  |

***Characteristics most associated with an unsuccessful reunification are:***

* + poor physical and/or mental health
  + behavioural problems
  + mixed race heritage
  + being an infant or a teenager
  + birth family in poverty or unstable housing
  + single parent with money worries
  + parental substance misuse
  + presence of domestic violence
  + child looked after due to neglect
  + parental ambivalence to the parenting role
  + lack of social support
  + parents facing complex, multiple problems
  + multiple placement breakdown
  + children placed in residential care
  + return to a family where initial problems are unresolved
  + long history of family involvement with social services
  + previous unsuccessful rehabilitation
  + return was not planned for and not part of the current care plan.

***Characteristics most associated with a successful reunification are:***

* + returning home with a sibling
  + returning to a changed family composition (ie: abuser has left)
  + looked after episodes that involve voluntary accommodation due to family crisis or a planned entry to care
  + returning home on a care order
  + strong multi-agency working by agencies supporting the return
  + good working relationship between the parents, foster carer and social worker
  + child and parent positive about the return home and the outcome of the care episode
  + staged return that is clearly set out in the care plan with clear expectations for parents
  + support for parents to help them address the child’s emotional and behavioural issues
  + issues relating to parenting capacity resolved
  + positive contact experiences whilst in care
  + good risk assessment that informs decision making and identifies services and support.