

## NHS Calderdale enhances child development monitoring



### case study

**When it comes to mastering the fundamental skills every child needs to develop properly, it is never too early to be on the look-out for potential problems. The sooner issues are spotted, the quicker they can be rectified.**

Historically, the majority of assessment tools for child development have been based on the pioneering work of Dr Mary Sheridan. But while these tools provided detailed insight in to how a child was progressing, they were frequently cumbersome and time-consuming, making the assessment laborious for both assessor and child.

GL Assessment's Schedule of Growing Skills (SGS) appraisal system is also based on Sheridan's groundbreaking child development work, but significantly, the assessment can be done quickly – usually within 30 minutes.

SGS provides assessors with a reliable snapshot of a child's development across nine vital areas of development: passive posture; active posture; locomotor; manipulative; visual; hearing and language; speech and language; interactive social; and self-care social. The easy-to-use record and profile forms ensure that where subsequent referrals are necessary, the assessor can provide a detailed overview of which aspects of development need specific attention.

SGS uses a range of colourful and engaging toys, such as building blocks, dolls, pegs and shapes, to make the assessment feel as much like playtime for the children as possible.

The original SGS assessment was trialled on over 1,000 children, providing health practitioners with the reassurance that the benchmarks are truly indicative of a child's development. A subsequent version, which contained minor modification, was trialled on an additional 500 children.

### NHS Calderdale

Recently, NHS Calderdale in West Yorkshire adopted SGS to identify specific development needs in children where an initial problem has been recognised. For example, when a mother feels her child is not developing at the same rate as other children of the same age in certain areas, such as language development.

NHS Calderdale believes that, "The benefit of using SGS is that it provides a benchmark for where a child should be and where they are at. It also helps our staff put a development action plan in place, and gives us them the evidence to make referrals to appropriate services."

The SGS record forms include a simple scoring system, making it easy to identify those children that need close monitoring or even immediate referral. The child's score can be quickly represented in the form of a graph, providing an accessible basis for discussions with parents or other professionals.

While the Trust is currently using SGS to focus on particular cases, the tools have been specifically designed so they can be used to assess the development of all children – dovetailing neatly with the Healthy Child Programme requirements for children's development to be monitored closely.

SGS can be used at any time for children from birth to five years, making it ideal for universal screening or as part of a Health Development Review under the Healthy Child Programme, which emphasises the benefits of early detection of any delay in a child's development.

The record forms are also available in two sizes. The A5 version can be easily inserted in to a child's Personal Health Record, or an A4 version is available, for those practitioners who prefer a larger record sheet.

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### SGS Training

In Calderdale, the staff who use SGS – the health visitors, school nurses and nursery nurses – have all undergone two half-day professional training sessions to bring them up to speed with using the system to conduct an assessment.

The training sessions used a combination of group discussion, presentations and videos to explore the best ways to engage children in the assessment programme. It also covered examples of good and not so good practice in how to administer the assessment.

The interactive, multi-disciplinary sessions also provided a practical forum for the Calderdale team to discuss how best to use the SGS toolkit.

One of the critical aspects of the training is that it reinforces the importance of adopting a consistent approach to assessments – a process, which ensures continuity when children are tested by different practitioners.

NHS Calderdale says, “We would recommend the tool to other PCTs. It is still early days for us, but where we’ve used it, SGS has been beneficial for both practitioners – and the children.”

“The benefit of using SGS is that it provides a benchmark for where a child should be and where they are at. It also helps us put a development action plan quickly in place, or make referrals to the appropriate service.”

*To find out more about SGS and see how you can use it in your organisation, you can view a short video overview at*

[www.gl-assessment.co.uk/SGSvideo](http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/SGSvideo)

### Benefits:

- By allowing the user to assess, score and offer feedback in about 30 minutes, SGS is incredibly quick and easy-to-use
- Can be used at any time with children from birth to five years
- Is ideal for universal screening or as part of a Health and Developmental Review under the new Healthy Child Programme
- A clear graphical representation of a child’s developmental level provides an accessible basis for discussion with other professionals and parents
- SGS provides clear administration instructions for all items and guidelines for scoring and interpreting results

April 2009

### About NHS Calderdale

NHS Calderdale is located within West Yorkshire. It invests over £300 million each year to improve the health and lives of local people, and it employs 650 staff, with over 400 based in the community providing front line clinical care to patients.



Available in A4 and A5 versions.  
The Complete Set contains:  
Stimulus materials, User Guide,  
10 Record Forms and 50 Profile  
Forms.

### contact

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