


# Parenting Assessment in Social Work



## FAMILY STRUCTURE



Checklist | Questions &  
Analysis

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### Checklist/questions -

### Family structure

For each person mentioned:

- How old are they?
- Where do they live?
- Who lives with them?
- How often do you and your children see or talk to them?
- How would you describe your relationship with them?
- What kind of relationship do they have with your child(ren)?
- Do they help you or your children in any way (e.g. childcare, emotional support, finances)?
- Has there ever been a time when social workers or the police needed to be involved with them? If so, what happened?

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### Analysing responses - Family structure

#### **What this might show about the parent:**

A parent who can clearly describe the people involved in their life—how old they are, where they live, how often they are in contact, and the nature of the relationship—demonstrates awareness of their support network and the wider influences around their child. Where a parent speaks warmly and consistently about positive relationships, especially those who offer help with childcare, emotional support, or practical matters, this indicates a strong protective network. It also reflects the parent's ability to build and maintain healthy adult connections.

In contrast, vague responses, reluctance to talk about key people, or idealised descriptions of relationships with known concerns (such as past police involvement) may suggest limited insight or an attempt to conceal risks. Describing someone with a complex or concerning history (e.g. domestic violence, drug use, past social care involvement) as a trusted figure in the child's life without recognising potential impact raises concerns about judgement and protective capacity.

#### **Implications for the child and parenting:**

Children are deeply affected by the adults who surround them—whether they live in the home or not. A parent with a safe, supportive network is more likely to manage stress, maintain consistent routines, and have trusted people to rely on in emergencies. Children in these households tend to experience more emotional security and better day-to-day care.

However, when parents maintain close relationships with people who pose a risk—such as individuals with a history of violence, abuse, or instability—the child may be exposed to harmful behaviour, emotional volatility, or unsafe environments. If the parent is not able or willing to set boundaries with risky individuals, the child may experience anxiety, confusion, or even direct harm. Additionally, when children are frequently in the care of people who are not well-known to professionals—or where past involvement with police or social services is minimised—this signals the need for further exploration around safety, supervision, and the parent's ability to protect.

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