



Risk assessment in care and protection: The case for actuarial approaches

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Abstract

The assessment of abuse is a highly emotionally charged activity. The requirement to provide an accountable and transparent assessment process requires the development of actuarial devices and clearly enunciated decision rules. Risk assessment requires the application of ecologically valid, evidence-based approaches. Such approaches, commonly transcribed into actuarial systems, are usually incorporated into a clinical reasoning approach. Whilst academic debate tends to highlight actuarial approaches as superior to approaches based on clinical experience, both common sense and the demands imposed on practitioners via cross examination demand that best practice incorporate triangulated assessment utilising both actuarial and clinical approaches to assessment. This article outlines a triangulated assessment and reporting strategy and its application to a case study.

Keywords

developmental psychology, child protection, psychological assessment, actuarial approaches, decision making