The Early Childhood (3-6) HOME Inventories

Information for users when preparing reports

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General

The HOME Inventory (Home Observation and Measurement of the Environment) (Caldwell and Bradley, 2003) is based on a substantial body of research regarding factors, which are supportive of positive child development. *The HOME Inventory* has an extensive research base that has gradually been expanded since the 1960s.

The Early Childhood (3-6) HOME Inventories

There is a standard Early Childhood (3-6) HOME inventory, a version for children in family child care settings and disability-adapted versions for children with developmental delay and those with auditory, visual and orthopaedic impairments.

The Early Childhood HOME Inventories include sub-scales (made up of several items), which assess different aspects of a child's experience. The sub-scales are:

- *learning materials*: the availability of a range of materials to meet the child's developmental needs;

- *language stimulation*: the overt attempts by parents to encourage language development through conversation, modelling and direct teaching;

- *physical environment*: is the physical environment safe , sufficiently roomy, and perceptually appealing;

- *responsivity*: the caregiver's emotional and verbal responsivity to the child and warmth in the relationship;

- *academic stimulation*: direct parental involvement with the child's learning and encouragement of the acquisition of skills and knowledge considered important by parents and child development professionals during the early childhood years;

- *modelling*: modelling by the parents of desirable and acceptable behaviour, thereby communicating those expectations to the child;

- *variety*: a family lifestyle that provides variety and experiential enrichment for the child;

- *acceptance*: parental ability to accept negative behaviour as something to be expected from young children rather than as an act demanding harsh reprisal.
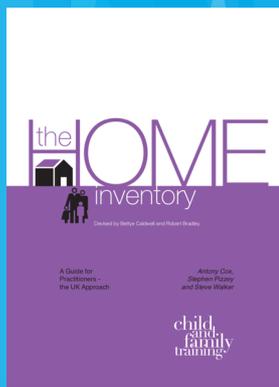
The disability-adapted versions consist of the same sub-scales. Some items in the sub-scales have been modified and supplementary items added to take account of developmental needs of a child with the particular disability.

The UK Approach

The information required to complete the Inventory is obtained by use of a semi-structured interview schedule combining interview and observation and a review of the social, emotional and physical home circumstances (Cox, Pizzey and Walker, 2009).

The interview explores the nature and variety of a child's day-to-day experiences, the quality of their home environment and the parenting capacity of the caregivers.

The interview is structured to cover a specific day; usually the previous day or previous weekday, and items are scored for both answers and observations. There are additional sections on areas such as play, toys, outings, dealing with difficult behaviour and contact with health professionals.

Scoring the HOME Inventory

The scores for the sub-scales are obtained from the completion of a record form that contains a number of items, which are defined by a glossary. The scores are compared to the median score for each sub-scale. The median score is the midway point of the scores in research on normal populations.

A sub-scale scores of two or three points below the median highlights a concern about that aspect of the child's experience. An overall score of seven points below the median raises a concern about the child's overall experience of care.

The HOME Inventory does not assess all aspects of a child's home environment, for example, family functioning. The sub-scales are scored on the basis of a home visit to the main caregiver and the child of concern. In practice the scores should not be used in isolation but must always be considered in the light of information from other sources.

The HOME Inventory discriminates better between "good enough" care and low-quality care for a child than between "good enough" and high-quality care. The qualitative information provided by the use of the semi-structured interview helps the practitioner identify whether the child is receiving high-quality care.

Summary

The HOME Inventory (Caldwell and Bradley, 2003) is well-established and tested and a good predictor of outcomes for children. *The HOME Inventory: the UK Approach* (Cox et al, 2009) is user friendly, provides a picture of the child's world from their perspective and is well received by families.

The Early Childhood Inventories are useful in a range of situations including: initial and later stages of assessment; assessing the level of change following interventions; providing a detailed picture of the care needed by children in foster and adoptive placements; and assessing the quality of parenting and support that might be required.

References

Caldwell, B.M. and Bradley, R.H. (2003) *HOME Inventory: Administration Manual Comprehensive Edition*. Little Rock, AR: University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.
Cox, A., Pizzey, S. and Walker, S. (2009) *The HOME Inventory: A Guide for Practitioners – The UK Approach*. York: Child and Family Training.

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