



Danger Zones and Stepping Stones Diagnostic Assessment Tool

1.0 Temporary Living
Arrangement Assessment
for Homelessness Services

Introduction

This assessment tool has been developed following extensive research into young people's experiences of a wide range of Temporary Living Arrangements. The aim is to support evidence-based decision-making across frontline homelessness services by facilitating better assessments of young people's living arrangements when they present/are referred for support. Temporary Living Arrangements may include informal settings such as staying with friends, family, acquaintances or strangers. They may also include service-provided accommodation options, such as large mixed needs hostels, night by night emergency shelters and supported accommodation. Critically, this tool is not suitable for assessing young people who are experiencing street homelessness.

The tool enables temporary living arrangements to be assessed in relation to the two components of the Danger Zones and Stepping Stones Model:

- › The level of risk that the environment young people are staying in cause them to experience harm (Y axis).
- › The likelihood a young person will receive the support they need to take steps away from homelessness towards suitable accommodation (X axis).

Plotting living arrangements on the matrix will help you to understand them in relation to the following four categories:



Storm Shelters:
Low risk / Low support



Stepping Stones:
Low risk / High support



Danger Zone:
High risk / Low support



Minefield:
High risk / High support

It is important to note that while the use of this tool will provide you with important insight into the realities of each young person's temporary living environment, it is by no means a definitive way of assessing the suitability of accommodation. As our research has found, young people's experiences of the factors we consider are hugely varied. For example, the impact of 'substance abuse' on one young person will be very different to the impact on another. As such, this tool should be used as an initial starting point to inform further questions and discussions to ensure the right decisions are made for each young person.

Exploring sensitive topics in responsible ways

This assessment tool aims to measure risk in what can be very dangerous living environments. As such, it contains questions that are highly sensitive. It is important that before the tool is used, young people are made aware of the sensitivity of some of its content and the purpose of the assessment is explained fully. We suggest the following disclaimer:

“

BECAUSE WE CARE ABOUT YOUR WELLBEING, WE WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT WHERE YOU'RE STAYING SO WE CAN UNDERSTAND HOW SUITABLE IT IS FOR YOU. UNDERSTANDING WHERE YOU ARE LIVING NOW WILL HELP US PROVIDE THE BEST SUPPORT WE CAN AND KEEP YOU SAFE. ARE YOU HAPPY TO CONTINUE WITH THE ASSESSMENT?

”

Assessing Risk (Y axis)



Actual experience of harm or imminent threat of harm – Automatically high risk environments

Q1. Have you experienced any forms of abuse where you are currently staying? (e.g. physical, sexual, emotional)

Yes No

Q2. Have you experienced any forms of abuse anywhere else as a result of where you are currently staying?

Yes No

If 'Yes':

Can you explain the link between the abuse you have experienced and where you are staying?

The causal link between the incidents of abuse and the young person's stay at their current living arrangement needs to be established to ensure the harm is being driven by the accommodation and not an external factor.

Q3. Do you feel in any immediate danger as a result of where you are currently staying?

Yes No

If 'Yes':

Can you explain why you feel in danger and how this is linked to where you are staying?

The causal link between the threat of harm/abuse and the young person's stay at their current living arrangement needs to be established to ensure the harm is being driven by the accommodation and not an external factor.

If the young person answers 'Yes' to any of the three questions above and you believe that the threat remains present they should be prioritized and placed into alternative accommodation immediately. The assessment should continue to further understanding of the young person's situation.

Point-based assessment



For the remainder of the questions in the assessment, please consider your experience in your current accommodation so far and answer 'Always', 'Frequently', 'Rarely' or 'Never'.

Note: Some of the questions in this section are positively phrased and some negatively phrased. As such, the direction of the response scale changes. Please ensure you are recording the correct response in each case.

Do you feel like you are isolated from your family and friends as a result of where you are currently staying? Never Sometimes Frequently Always

Do you feel like the people you are staying with pressure you to do things or act in certain ways to stay in the accommodation? Never Sometimes Frequently Always

Do you feel able to speak openly to the person/people you're staying with if you have any problems/concerns about the accommodation? Always Frequently Sometimes Never

Do you feel pressured to consume drugs or alcohol in the place you're staying? Never Sometimes Frequently Always

Do you feel at risk of harm where you're staying because of your own drug/alcohol use? Never Sometimes Frequently Always

Do you feel at risk of harm where you're staying because of someone else's drug/alcohol use? Never Sometimes Frequently Always

Do the physical standards of your accommodation (cleanliness, upkeep) allow you to keep safe and healthy? Always Frequently Sometimes Never

Do you feel you have adequate personal space where you're currently staying, including somewhere to sleep? Always Frequently Sometimes Never

Do you feel there are enough security measures where you're currently staying to keep you safe? Always Frequently Sometimes Never

Do you feel the place you're staying has sufficient facilities to meet your basic needs (cooking, cleaning etc.)? Always Frequently Sometimes Never

Count for each column: _____

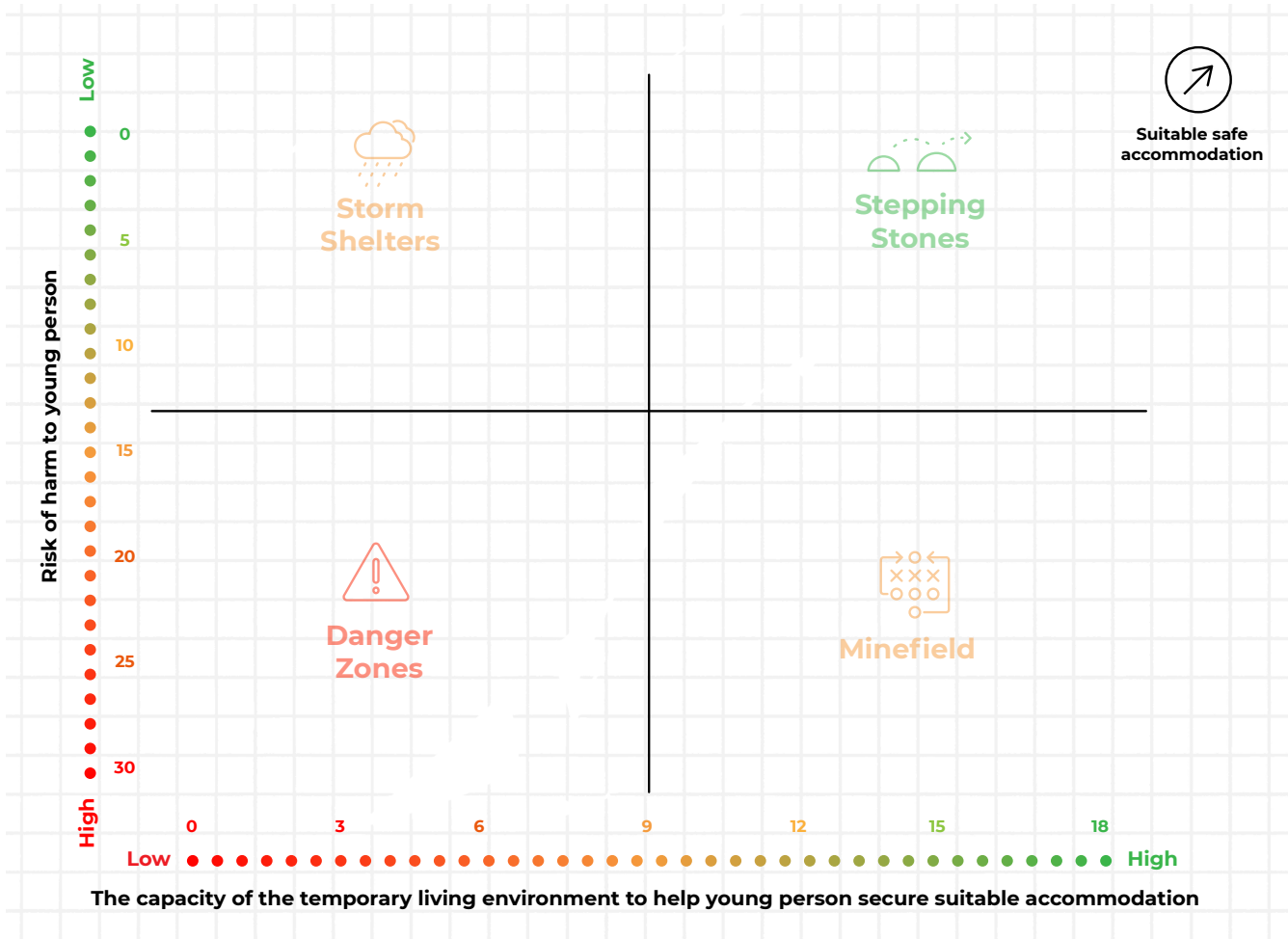
Score calculation: 0 (Above count) (Above count) (Above count)
 _____ x 1 = _____ x 2 = _____ x 3 = _____

Score total (Y axis): Sum of column scores = _____ out of 30

The Danger Zones Assessment Model



The scores generated above for risk (0-30) and support (0-18) should be used to plot the young person's temporary living arrangement on the Danger Zones and Stepping Stone matrix below.



Taking the Appropriate Action

The placement of the young person's Temporary Living Arrangement on the Danger Zones and Stepping Stones matrix provides insight into the how suitable it is for them. The following provides a general summary of the appropriate actions that are recommended:



Storm Shelters: If a young person is staying in a Storm Shelter it is safe for them to continue to do so if necessary. However, they should receive increased support and advice regarding their housing options to ensure they can take pro-active steps towards more suitable accommodation.



Stepping Stones: If the young person is staying in a Stepping Stone it is appropriate that they continue to do so until they are ready and able to progress. Regular contact should be maintained to ensure that the young person's living circumstances remain conducive to successful move-on.



Danger Zone: If the young person is residing in a Danger Zone they should be immediately placed into alternative accommodation. Further to this, all efforts should be made to address any ongoing threats which may be present and the young person should be provided with appropriate support to deal with any difficulties they may be facing due to their past experiences.



Minefield: If a young person is residing in a minefield they should also be prioritised and placed into alternative accommodation. As above, all efforts should be made to address any ongoing threats which may be present and the young person should be provided appropriate with support to deal with any difficulties they may be facing due to their past experiences.



Homelessness has no place

With support from



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