

## Information for Carers

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### Understanding the Attachment Style Interview (ASI)

The Attachment Style Interview is an assessment tool now being used in the social care field to look at characteristics of parents and carers (current or prospective) to help us to assess their risks and resiliencies in relation to family life and parenting. Originally used in research (at Royal Holloway, University of London) to assess vulnerability and resilience in parents, it is now being introduced for use with carers (current or prospective) to provide a more standardised tool for assessment in service settings.

*The following information helps you to understand how it works:*

#### **What is the Attachment Style Interview (ASI)?**

A conversational style interview which will question about your current relationship with your partner, your family of origin and with two adults to whom you feel very close. It will then ask about your general style of relating to other adults in terms of your self-reliance, how easy it is for you to get close and your ease in accessing help.

#### **How long does the ASI take?**

The interview usually takes just over an hour, although this may vary a bit. We like to tape-record it in order to use your actual responses to help us score correctly. We will not need these tapes after the interview is scored and can destroy them if you wish. If it is not possible to tape-record, then the interviewer will take detailed notes.

#### **What categories does the ASI use?**

The support section of the ASI categorises aspects of the support received from your partner (if you have one) and other close figures. This is based on levels of confiding about important topics, emotional support received, the quality of day-to-day interaction and feelings of closeness. The information about these relationships is then combined to form an assessment of how 'secure' your ability to relate to close others is. Your type of attachment style is then determined by the extent to which you feel you are a person who copes better alone, values independence and privacy and is wary of other people. Alternatively whether you are highly sociable and need others around to cope well and feel anxious when close others are away. Some people have a mixture of these characteristics. We will also ask about whether you get angry with other people easily or are easily hurt by other people's criticisms or harsh remarks.

#### **How will categorising my style help in the assessment?**

Deciding on your (and your partner's) style will help us to see whether you are the type of person who uses support easily in coping with difficulties or stress, including parenting (when applicable). This will help us to think about the type of support most suitable for you if you need it in the future. Also, knowing your style may help us to consider any help you may need with parenting.

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## **Does the ASI assess what sort of parent I am/will be?**

No. The ASI does not ask about parenting or relationship with children. This is of course important but will be assessed by other means.

## **Is the ASI assessment reliable?**

The research studies using the ASI find that it is reliable both in UK studies and in those used abroad. This means that different people administering the interview will score it in the same way. There is research evidence which links different attachment styles to different ways of relating to partner and parenting.

## **Can my style change?**

Attachment style as assessed by the ASI can change when circumstances change. For example, if you have major changes in relationships, become more isolated or are under a lot of stress this may reflect in your coping and support seeking strategies. Also, you may retain the same basic style but feel it more intensely and/or react differently to those around you at different times. However studies show that styles are fairly stable over the period of a year and that for the majority of people they do stay relatively stable.

## **Can I know what my style is?**

You should discuss with your social worker whether it would be useful for you to know how your style was categorised. Our main concern is less with the type of style than how close your supportive relationships are in practice and how easily you can access help.