

Holistic Assessment

Holistic assessment ensures that all the needs of a person are known so those caring for them can respond accordingly. It identifies unmet needs and provides for a multi-disciplinary and coordinated response. A holistic assessment allows the individual and their families to consider all aspects of care and plan for the future.

Assessment should be 'concerns-led' and flexible to respond to new circumstances.

When should the assessment happen?

Assessment is a continual process, beginning when it is recognised the individual is entering the end of life phase. It should be repeated whenever the individual or a professional considers it necessary.

Sharing information

Assessment records should be shared with the individual's consent and with other professionals following the principles of role-based access. This minimises the need for tiring repetition of questions.

Who should conduct the assessment?

The assessor should:

- Have an appropriate level of knowledge of the condition, symptoms and likely progression
- Have a recognised level of competence in assessment
- Be well informed about local health and social service providers, referral criteria and support services
- Be aware of the role of advance care planning.

What should be assessed?

There are five key 'domains' to a full assessment and their importance might change as the person moves along the care pathway.

These are:

- Background information and assessment preferences (often drawing on the individual's care record and previous assessments)
- Physical needs (discuss possible future symptoms but emphasise they are not inevitable)
- Social/occupational needs (e.g. family, social life and money issues)
- Psychological wellbeing (the assessment should start with an exploratory question that invites the individual to identify any concerns)
- Spiritual wellbeing and life goals (with sensitivity to cultural differences).

Find out about the e-learning modules in end of life care at: <http://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/end-of-life-care/>