

AFT and Research

SCORE Index of Family Functioning and Change

The Association for Family Therapy (AFT) has, since 2006, supported the research group developing the [SCORE outcome measure](#) (PDF). This is designed to evaluate therapy through its effects on the operation of relationships in the home and as such is also a valuable indicator of family life in any population. The main version consists of 19 questions (15 scales, four self-descriptions) which take less than 10 minutes for family members to complete.

[Introduction to using SCORE-15](#)

[Instructions for Excel group data entry](#)

[SCORE-15 data entry excel97](#)

[Outcome monitoring with couples and families \(draft\)](#)

[Final SCORE-15](#)

With AFT support, the SCORE has now been accepted by the [CAMHS Outcome Research Consortium](#) (CORC). This significant development means SCORE can be used by any CAMHS and data can be submitted to CORC for us to use in its development. SCORE is becoming available in more languages for use with many families for whom comprehension of written English is problematic.

SCORE development updates

The SCORE is now established as a proven measure of family functioning and we have completed the research to establish its validity as an index of therapeutic change (Stratton et al in press 2013). A full account of its development, was published in the [Journal of Family Therapy \(Stratton, Bland, Janes & Lask 2010\)](#). The successive articles in Context describe something of the lengthy process of getting the SCORE to this point and you can access the final version of the [SCORE 15](#) (PDF). In the same issue of JFT, Alan Carr's team report a substantial independent investigation based on the SCORE 40 which provides further validation of our approach ([Cahill et al, 2010](#)).

SCORE is a self-report outcome measure designed to be sensitive to the kinds of changes in family functioning that systemic family and couples therapists see as indications of useful therapeutic change. It is intended to be serviceable in everyday practice; short, acceptable to clients and usable across the full range of our work: the full range of presenting problems, the clientele, and the formats of work: At least, individual, couple and family. It can be read in terms of second order change; structural change; change in the stories the family members have about their family; change in systemic processes within the family; in an orientation to solutions; improvements in relation to hopefulness, agency, hostility, risk, blaming, well-being, happiness and so on. All in 19 questions.

The current achievement is that we have a short version of SCORE which has 15 descriptions of aspects of family life and process, along with other indicators of the state of the family. The research that created the SCORE--5 showed that the earlier 40 items were all useful so the SCORE 40 is also available as a more detailed, probably research,

instrument. Meanwhile Alan Carr and his group in Dublin took the same SCORE 40 and have created a 29 item version that is entirely compatible with, but more detailed than our 15 item short form.

So we are now able to offer the [SCORE-15](#) (PDF) which fits on a single A4 sheet. It can be used as an overall measure of family functioning but will also generate 'sub-scale' scores from the 5 items on each of three dimensions:

- Strengths and adaptability
- Overwhelmed by difficulties
- Disrupted communication

We are now proceeding to develop versions for children 8 to 11 years and for adults with learning difficulties while also developing versions in other languages. Judith Lask and Reenee Singh have charge of the work to create culturally sensitive versions of SCORE-15 for different cultural groups. The French, Bengali, and Norwegian versions are primarily based in the UK, while 16 European countries, co-ordinated for EFTA by Mina Todoulou, are engaged in their own translations and validation study using the same protocol as the UK project. So our main priority now is to complete the current study which will find out whether the SCORE is an effective indicator of change during systemic family therapy and can therefore be used to provide evidence for the effectiveness of our approaches. We urgently need data from use of the SCORE 15 at first, fourth and last sessions. Many clinics have already volunteered but data are slow to arrive, and we would welcome more therapists to join us.

The SCORE project has so far been funded entirely by AFT as a major contribution to establishing a research base for Couple, Family and Systemic Therapy in the UK. We are pleased to say that, under the auspices of Julia Bland we have now obtained a 3 year grant from the South London & Maudsley NHS Trust to continue the work.

The SCORE development team is currently: Isabel Ekdawi (Principle Investigator), Peter Stratton, Judith Lask, and Chris Evans. A larger group, taking on specific further developments has recently been formed as an extension of the Academic and Research Committee and a further small group is working on the materials for [CORC+](#) and [CYP-IAPT](#).