



THE SCOPE

JUL 2023 VOL. 8 | RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

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Conducting a needs assessment can be a useful method to inform programme formation and development. In this issue, we will be sharing with you what a needs assessment entails, as well as a brief guide on how to conduct one.

Next, read on to learn more about our own needs assessment, *Needs That Matter* as we share some considerations and processes in conceptualising the study.

A GUIDE TO

Needs Assessments

In this article, we will be introducing needs assessments in the context of social work programmes — including the what, when, why, and how.



What is a needs assessment?

While there are many definitions of what needs assessments are, they generally involve a **systematic approach to identify and gather information about the needs or issues** within a target population.

Ideally, a needs assessment is conducted **before** implementing a new programme.

However, it can also be conducted **during** the course of an existing programme, especially if a gap in service delivery is observed. Needs can change over time, and it is necessary that programmes remain relevant to suit the current needs of the target population.

When to conduct a needs assessment?



Why conduct a needs assessment?



A needs assessment provides the essential information for understanding the needs of the target population and hence the type of support they may require.

The information gathered can be used to guide programme design, thus ensuring that programmes are **responsive** and **targeted** to the needs of the target population.

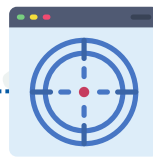
Below is a basic guide illustrating the steps to conducting a needs assessment:

How to conduct a needs assessment?

1

Scope the needs assessment.

Understand the purpose of your needs assessment, determine the approach, and identify the stakeholders involved.



2

Determine the assessment criteria.

Develop the list of criteria that will enable for prioritisation of needs for future planning and action.



3

Plan for data collection.

Identify the data required and determine the method for collection.



4

Collect and analyse the data.

Conduct the data collection process and analyse the data for insights.



5

Identify the next steps and report back.

Review the identified needs and explore suitable interventions.



Needs That Matter (NTM)

Caregivers' perception of their own needs as their child undergoes cancer treatment in Singapore

In this article, we share with you the development process of a needs assessment that was recently conducted — NTM. This includes a background of how the project started, and some of our reflections in the first step of conducting a needs assessment — scoping the study.

How did the project start?

Following an initiative by the Caregiver Support Services (CSS) and the Research Team to review and improve existing programmes, **three opportunities** were identified:

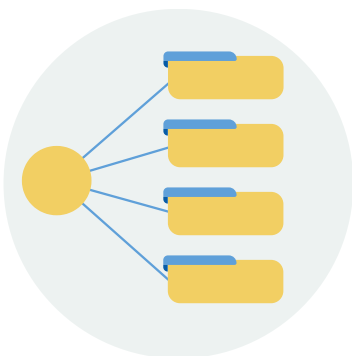
- 1 To evaluate how certain programmes have met (or not met) their intended reach.
- 2 To refine the feedback loop such that feedback received from programme participants is actionable.
- 3 To implement a systematic process to analyse collective caregiver needs that can be addressed at a programme level.

CCF CSS provides programmes to support caregivers of children under cancer treatment in the hospitals. [Click here to find out more!](#)



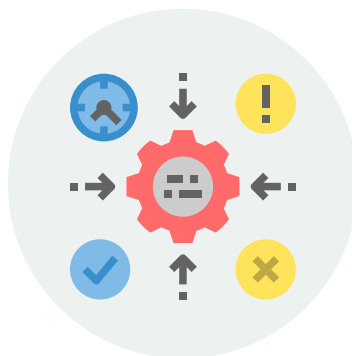
Literature Scan

A review of existing literature tells us that the needs of caregivers of children with cancer are well established. However, there were difficulties in operationalising these findings from the literature into actionable guidelines. This is due to various reasons:



Findings are often reported as broad areas of needs instead of individual needs.

(e.g. psychosocial needs vs. issues coping with lifestyle changes)



Findings are not contextualised to the current experience of our caregivers.

(i.e. Singapore, post-Covid)



Other studies have focused on an array of needs that may not be aligned with programme priorities.

(e.g. medical services, relationship with medical staff)



The literature does not inform us how caregivers prioritise their needs.

CONCEPTUALISING THE STUDY

Main goals of the needs assessment



1

To identify the **current** unmet needs among caregivers whose children are undergoing treatment



2

To identify which needs are more **important** to the caregivers



3

To provide **actionable** insights for the programme team to improve their existing programmes

REFLECTION: Costs and benefits of conducting a needs assessment

It is important to weigh the costs and benefits of conducting a needs assessment and deliberate if it is the best choice of action for the situation. Conducting an initial literature review can often provide us with information which could be directly applied to the programmes.

Scoping the study

As the CSS team is the expert on the subject matter and the recipient of the study results, the research team worked closely with them in the conceptualisation of the study. This gave them a greater say in the study design, hence allowing the study to be aligned to match their goals and expectations.

Some considerations in guiding our discussion:



- Who is our population of interest?
- What mode of data collection is most ideal for our study?
- What potential findings can we expect?
- How would these potential findings inform our programmes?
- How would our timeline look like?
- What is the expected involvement of the respective teams throughout the course of the study?

Deciding which needs to measure:

The process of creating a list of needs for our needs assessment was heavily guided by our goals of the study and hence, active steps were taken to fulfil the needs of the user of the findings — the CSS team.

The list of needs assessed should be:

Representative of the needs of the caregivers

Actionable by the programme team

Assessable by a self-administered survey

Easily understood for caregivers to answer



REFLECTION:

Study Design - Generating the list of needs

To generate the initial list of needs, we took on a **literature-driven approach** as the needs of caregivers are already well established in the existing literature. Another approach is participant-led, where the initial list would be organically created from existing caregivers by conducting interviews and/or focus groups. This would give the participants a greater voice in deciding their needs and is more useful in fields that do not have information well-established in the literature.

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Thank you!

We hope that you've enjoyed reading this issue of The Scope. The Scope is published bi-annually, providing you with exclusive insights into our latest research studies in a digestible format. Through sharing these bite-sized research findings, we hope that we can make research relating to childhood cancer more accessible to everyone.

If you are interested to read about our studies in greater detail, the reports are located in the shared drive. Alternatively, contact anyone from the research team for reports, inquiries or feedback.

