



## Overview of the Developmental Behaviour Checklist (DBC)

by Professor Bruce Tonge and Dr Avril Brereton

### What is the DBC?

The DBC is a 96 item checklist that assesses a broad range of behavioural and emotional disturbances in young people with intellectual or developmental disability aged between 4 and 18 years. It is completed by parents or other primary carers or teachers. This should take no more than 15 minutes. The items were independently derived from a study of the medical files of 7000 intellectually disabled children and adolescents seen in a developmental assessment clinic.

### Structure of the DBC

There are parent/primary carer (DBC-P) and teacher report (DBC-T) versions of the DBC. The parent version has 96 items and is completed by the person fulfilling the primary carer role and who has known the young person for at least 6 months. The teacher version has 94 items and is completed by a teacher who has known the young person for at least 2 months.

### Scoring the DBC

Each behavioural description is scored on a 0, 1 or 2 rating scale.

- 0 = not true as far as you know
- 1 = somewhat or sometimes true
- 2 = very true or often true

### The DBC is scored at three levels

1. *The Total Behaviour Problem Score (TBPS)* is an overall measure of emotional and behavioural problems. The DBC can also detect clinically significant levels of overall emotional and behavioural disturbance (a score of 46 or greater).

2. *Five subscales (derived from factor analysis)* - scores give a measure of disturbance across five sub-scales: Disruptive/Anti-social Behaviour, Self-absorbed, Communication Disturbance, Anxiety and Social Relating.

3. *Individual behaviour items* – indicates the prevalence and severity of individual items.

### **The DBC can be used for the following purposes:**

#### **1. Clinical Assessment**

The DBC can be used in conjunction with a clinical assessment as a complementary and quick method of obtaining information about the presence or absence of a number of different emotional and behavioural problems. Information from teachers can give important information about whether the behaviours occur in contexts outside the home.

#### **2. Change over time and monitoring interventions**

Repeated administration of the DBC provides an effective means of following change and measuring the consequences of an intervention, e.g. the introduction of medication or a behavioural intervention program.

#### **3. Research**

The DBC can also be used in research studies into the phenomenology and aetiology, treatment outcomes, specific behaviour problems and causes of intellectual disability.

### **The use of the DBC as a screening instrument for autism**

#### **1. DBC-ASA**

The effectiveness of the DBC as a screening tool has been evaluated. A recent study determined that the DBC can be used as a reliable and valid autism screening tool (Brereton et al, 2002). A 29 item scale - the DBC Autism Screening Algorithm (DBC-ASA) was developed using items from the DBC and evaluated in a sample of 180 children with autism (DSM-IV Autistic Disorder) and 180 controls matched for age, sex and IQ. The DBC-ASA has good validity in discriminating young people (aged 4-18) with autism and IQ ranging from normal to severe intellectual disability from others using a cut-off score of 17.

#### **2. DBC Early Screen**

This study aimed to identify emotional and behavioural problems specific to young children with autism using the Developmental Behaviour Checklist (DBC-P) and evaluate the efficacy of this checklist as a screening tool for autism in children with developmental delay aged 18-48 months. Subjects were 60 children with autism and developmental delay and 60 children with developmental delay without autism. Features were identified which differentiated the children with autism from those with developmental delay without autism. Analyses revealed that a 17-item version of the DBC-P performed well as a screening tool for autism. The DBC-P offers a potential simple and inexpensive method of screening at risk populations of preschool children with developmental delay for autism, facilitating timely referral to scarce specialist autism diagnostic services.

## Translations

The parent version of the DBC is available in the following languages: Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Portuguese (Brazilian), Spanish, Swedish, Turkish and Vietnamese.

## References

Brereton, A.V., Tonge, B.J., A. Mackinnon & Einfeld, S.L. (2002). Screening Young People for Autism Using the Developmental Behaviour Checklist. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 41 (11) 1-7.

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Einfeld, Stewart, L. and Tonge, Bruce, J. (2002) Manual for the Developmental Behaviour Checklist (second edition).

Gray KM, Tonge BJ (2005) Screening for autism in infants and preschool children with developmental delay. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 39 (5): 378-386.

For more detailed information and further references:

<http://www.med.monash.edu.au/spppm/research/devpsych/dbc.html>

DBC materials enquiries should be directed to:

[DBC@monash.edu](mailto:DBC@monash.edu)