

**Adult Social Care Outcomes Toolkit  
(ASCOT) SCT4 guidance**

*Version 1.0*

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The Policy Research Unit in Quality and Outcomes of person-centred care (QORU) is a collaboration involving researchers in health and social care from the Universities of Kent, Oxford and the London School of Economics (LSE) funded by the Department of Health and Social Care.

Our aim is to improve the quality of health and social care of people with long-term conditions through generating high-quality evidence about need, quality and outcomes of person-centred care.

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## About ASCOT SCT4

ASCOT SCT4 is a self-completion version of the Adult Social Care Outcomes Toolkit (ASCOT). It is a tool designed to measure the social care-related quality of life (SCRQoL) of the individual completing the questionnaire. If you are unsure if SCT4 is the right tool for your project, the short video on the ASCOT website ([www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot](http://www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot)) that compares the different versions of ASCOT.

SCT4 is a self-completion questionnaire, which means that it is designed to be completed by the person whose SCRQoL you are measuring. If completing a questionnaire is likely to be difficult, other versions of ASCOT are available. These include a face-to-face interview version (INT4), an easy read version of SCT4 (ASCOT SCT4 Easy Read) and a Braille version of SCT4.

Please contact the ASCOT team ([ascot@kent.ac.uk](mailto:ascot@kent.ac.uk)) if you are interested in using the Braille version of ASCOT. The other tools are available on our website (please note that to access and use the tools a licence is required – the licensing process includes registration and consent to the terms and conditions).

## SCRQoL explained

SCRQoL refers to those aspects of a person's quality of life that are relevant to, and the focus of, social care interventions. SCT4 measures what a person's SCRQoL is like at the time of completing the questionnaire. We call this current SCRQoL. Unless you are using ASCOT as a baseline measure *before* a service is put in place, current SCRQoL is usually the person's quality of life with services and support. A current SCRQoL score can be calculated for each person, as long as they have answered all of the ASCOT questions. Further information about the current SCRQoL score can be found in the **Scoring ASCOT** section below.

## ASCOT SCT4 domains

The measure of current SCRQoL is comprised of questions covering eight areas of a person's life, which we call domains. In identifying and defining these domains, we focused on areas of quality of life sensitive to the outcomes of social care services. The domains were informed by consultations with policy-makers and experts in the field, reviews of the literature in this area, and cognitive testing and focus groups with people using social care services (Qureshi et al., 1998; Bamford et al., 1999; Netten et al., 2002; Harris et al., 2005; Netten et al., 2005; Malley et al., 2006; Miller et al., 2008). The ASCOT domains are therefore relevant to, and the focus of, social care, whilst also being valued by social care recipients and policy-makers alike.

The definitions for each of the eight ASCOT domains are shown in Table 1 below. These eight domains are used in all of the ASCOT tools for people who are supported by social care (ASCOT Carers tools have their own, but related, set of domains). In ASCOT SCT4, outcomes

in each domain are measured by one question with four outcome states (with the exception of the dignity domain - see the section on the dignity filter question below).

Table 1: Definitions of the ASCOT domains

User SCRQoL Domain	Definition
Control over daily life	The service user can choose what to do and when to do it, having control over his/her daily life and activities
Personal cleanliness and comfort	The service user feels s/he is personally clean and comfortable and looks presentable or, at best, is dressed and groomed in a way that reflects his/her personal preferences
Food and drink	The service user feels s/he has a nutritious, varied and culturally appropriate diet with enough food and drink s/he enjoys at regular and timely intervals
Personal safety	The service user feels safe and secure. This means being free from fear of abuse, falling or other physical harm and fear of being attacked or robbed
Social participation and involvement	The service user is content with their social situation, where social situation is taken to mean the sustenance of meaningful relationships with friends and family, and feeling involved or part of a community, should this be important to the service user
Occupation	The service user is sufficiently occupied in a range of meaningful activities, whether formal employment, unpaid work, caring for others or leisure activities
Accommodation, cleanliness and comfort	The service user feels their home environment, including all the rooms, is clean and comfortable
Dignity	The negative and positive psychological impact of support and care on the service user's personal sense of significance

## Understanding the SCT4 outcome states

Each current SCRQoL question has four response options, relating to four outcome states. The outcome states are shown in Table 2 below (from best to worst).

Table 2: Definitions of ASCOT outcomes states

Outcome state	Definition
Ideal	The individual's wishes and preferences in this aspect of their life are (or would be) fully met
No needs	The individual has (or would have) no or the type of temporary trivial needs that would be expected in this area of life of someone with no impairments.
Some needs	Some needs are distinguished from no needs by being sufficiently important or frequent to affect an individual's quality of life.
High-level needs	High-level needs are distinguished from some needs by having mental or physical health implications if they are not met over a period of time. This may be because of severity or frequency.

The person completing SCT4 does not need to have an understanding of the four outcome states to answer the questions. We have conceptualised these states into response options for each domain. The person completing SCT4 is simply asked a question and presented with four statements. Each statement relates to one of the outcome states presented above. The statements in each question are always ordered with the best outcome state (ideal) at the top and high-level needs at the bottom. The person completing the questionnaire is asked to choose the statement that best fits their experience by ticking the box next to that option. Some questions have an additional sentence to aid understanding. An example from the occupation domain is shown in Box 1 below.

Box 1. An example question (occupation domain)

**Which of the following statements best describes how you spend your time?**

*When you are thinking about how you spend your time, please include anything you value or enjoy, including leisure activities, formal employment, voluntary or unpaid work, and caring for others.*

**Please tick (✓) one box**

I'm able to spend my time as I want, doing things I value or enjoy

I'm able to do enough of the things I value or enjoy with my time

I do some of the things I value or enjoy with my time, but not enough

I don't do anything I value or enjoy with my time

## The dignity filter domain

Each domain of SCRQoL is explored by a single question in SCT4 except the dignity domain, which has two questions. The first dignity question asks about how *having* help makes you feel, while the second asks how *the way you are helped* makes you feel. It is only the second question, *how the way you are helped makes you feel*, that reflects the ASCOT definition of dignity and is included in the current SCRQoL score. The other question is a filter question and is not included in the scoring. There is, however, a very good reason for including this filter question. During the development and testing of ASCOT SCT4, we found that people often wanted to answer the main ASCOT dignity question by telling how they felt about needing or receiving that help. While this is important, it is not the focus of ASCOT. We added the filter question to enable people to express how they felt about getting help before going on to tell us *how the way they are helped* makes them feel. Testing found that the addition of this extra question helped respondents answer the second question in the way that we intended.

## Scoring ASCOT SCT4

Current SCRQoL cannot be calculated if any of questions, bar the dignity filter question, have been left blank. All survey questions must be answered.

ASCOT is a preference-weighted measure of quality of life. This means that the raw scores used in the data-entry spreadsheet for the different outcome states (1,2, 3, 4) are converted into different numbers, reflecting their relative importance/value to the general population. A full list of these can be found in Table 3. For example, research has shown that having as much control over your daily life as you want is seen as being more important than having as much social contact as you want. The weighted scores used in the calculation of ASCOT reflect these preferences. We checked whether people being supported by services had different preferences to the general population and found that, overall, they did not. The final weights reported below were derived from a series of studies. More details of these studies can be found in the report by Netten et al. (2012).

Table 3. A list of the weights for each ASCOT domain level

Domain	Weighted rating
<b>Control over daily life</b>	
1. I have as much control over my daily life as I want	1.000
2. I have adequate control over my daily life	0.919
3. I have some control over my daily life but not enough	0.541
4. I have no control over my daily life	0.000
<b>Personal cleanliness and comfort</b>	
1. I feel clean and am able to present myself the way I like	0.911
2. I feel adequately clean and presentable	0.789
3. I feel less than adequately clean or presentable	0.265
4. I don't feel at all clean or presentable	0.195
<b>Food and drink</b>	
1. I get all the food and drink I like when I want	0.879
2. I get adequate food and drink at OK times	0.775
3. I don't always get adequate or timely food and drink	0.294
4. I don't always get adequate or timely food and drink, and I think there is a risk to my health	0.184
<b>Personal safety</b>	
1. I feel as safe as I want	0.880
2. Generally I feel adequately safe, but not as safe as I would like	0.452
3. I feel less than adequately safe	0.298
4. I don't feel at all safe	0.114
<b>Social participation and involvement</b>	
1. I have as much social contact as I want with people I like	0.873
2. I have adequate social contact with people	0.748
3. I have some social contact with people, but not enough	0.497
4. I have little social contact with people and feel socially isolated	0.241
<b>Occupation</b>	
1. I'm able to spend my time as I want, doing things I value or enjoy	0.962
2. I'm able do enough of the things I value or enjoy with my time	0.927
3. I do some of the things I value or enjoy with my time but not enough	0.567
4. I don't do anything I value or enjoy with my time	0.170

**Domain** **Weighted rating**

**Accommodation cleanliness and comfort**

1. My home is as clean and comfortable as I want	0.863
2. My home is adequately clean and comfortable	0.780
3. My home is less than adequately clean or comfortable	0.374
4. My home is not at all clean or comfortable	0.288

**Dignity**

1. The way I'm helped and treated makes me think and feel better about myself	0.847
2. The way I'm helped and treated does not affect the way I think or feel about myself	0.637
3. The way I'm helped and treated sometimes undermines the way I think and feel about myself	0.295
4. The way I'm helped and treated completely undermines the way I think and feel about myself	0.263

The weighted scores are added together and entered into a formula to give a current SCRQoL score. The formula for calculating current SCRQoL in SCT4 is:

$$\text{Current SCRQoL} = (0.203 \times \text{weighted score}) - 0.466$$

This formula produces a score of between 1.00 and -0.17 (final ASCOT scores are rounded to two decimal places). The formula is based on a Time Trade Off (TTO) exercise with members of the public, with the final score being anchored to 0.00 (being dead) and 1.00 (ideal state). Thus, while a score of 1.00 would mean that the person has reported the ideal state in all domains, a score of 0.00 is, in the view of the general population, the same as being dead. Scores, and the states that they represent, between -0.01 and -0.17 are seen as being worse than death. Box 2 shows a worked example of the calculation behind the current SCRQoL score.

## Box 2. Calculating current SCRQoL in SCT4

For a respondent who reports *no needs* in each domain

Weighted score

$0.919$  (control) +  $0.789$  (personal cleanliness and comfort) +  $0.775$  (food and drink) +  $0.452$  (personal safety) +  $0.748$  (social participation and involvement) +  $0.927$  (occupation) +  $0.780$  (accommodation cleanliness and comfort) +  $0.637$  (dignity) =  $6.027$

Current SCRQoL =  $(0.203 \times \text{weighted score}) - 0.466$

$0.6027 \times 0.203 = 1.223481$

$1.223481 - 0.466 = 0.757481$

Current SCRQoL =  $0.76$

The formula outlined above can be used with a range of data-entry and analysis tools (MS Excel, SPSS, STATA and so forth); however, we do provide an MS Excel ASCOT data-entry tool specifically for SCT4. The tool can be purchased via a dedicated link shared upon obtaining a licence (approval of registration form). The tool costs a one-off fee of £50 per ASCOT user. Users with multiple settings, such as care home providers, should buy one for each care home. The spreadsheet includes guidance on how to use it, and space to enter data from up to 20,000 cases. For each case, where there are no missing data, it automatically calculates a current SCRQoL score. It also features a sheet that presents the aggregate ASCOT data. This includes an overall current SCRQoL score, which is an average (mean) of all of cases entered, and frequencies and percentages for each questions. There are also a number of visual representations of the data, which can be helpful in reports.

### Impact and ASCOT SCT4

ASCOT SCT4 measures what a person's life is currently like, which we call current SCRQoL. It is not able, at least on its own, to measure the impact of care and support, and is limited in what it can tell us about the impact of services. This is because social care-related quality of life may be influenced by a number of different factors, including health status, severity of impairment and living environment (Forder et al., 2016). If you would like to measure the impact of services have, you may want to look at other ASCOT tools, such as INT4 ([www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot](http://www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot)). Another option would be to measure current SCRQoL before a social care intervention and then again after the intervention (controlling for confounding variables, such as deterioration in health status).

## Comparing your data to national ASCOT SCT4 data

NHS Digital collects ASCOT SCT4 data as part of its annual Adult Social Care Survey (England). In this survey, a sample of service users from each council with Adult Social Care Responsibilities complete a questionnaire, which includes the nine ASCOT SCT4 questions. The ASCOT SCT4 questions are used to populate parts of the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) (<http://content.digital.nhs.uk/article/3695/Adult-Social-Care-Outcomes-Framework-ASCOF>). In particular, ASCOT SCT4 is used to populate item 1A (Social care-related quality of life) of ASCOF. However, in this ASCOF measure, unlike the main ASCOT tool, all the answer to the questions are equally weighted and do not use the four level preference weights.

Raw data from the ASCS can be downloaded from the NHS Digital website. Details of the 2016-17 survey, alongside links to data, can be found here:

<http://content.digital.nhs.uk/socialcare/collections#The%20Personal%20Social%20Services%20Adult%20Social%20Care%20Survey,%20England>

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## Using ASCOT SCT4: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### How do I obtain permission to use ASCOT SCT4?

To read this guidance and see the ASCOT tools, you or your organisation needs to be registered via the ASCOT website. If you or your organisation has not registered, please go to [www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot](http://www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot), download and complete the registration form, and submit to [ascot@kent.ac.uk](mailto:ascot@kent.ac.uk). You will be asked to agree to the terms and conditions during the registration process. The registration form will be reviewed by the ASCOT team. If approved, the registration form and the terms and conditions will form the licence for the use of the ASCOT measure, as specified in the registration form. Upon approval, you will receive a confirmation email with a copy of the SCT4 instrument, this guidance and a link to a purchasable data-entry tool.

### Do I have to pay to use ASCOT?

The licence to use ASCOT is free for not-for-profit organisations. For definitions of not-for-profit use and for-profit use, please see the ASCOT website ([www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot](http://www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot)). For-profit users, including consultants, may be charged a licence fee. To enquire about a for-profit licence, download and complete the for-profit licence enquiry form on our website [www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot](http://www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot) and submit to [ascot@kent.ac.uk](mailto:ascot@kent.ac.uk).

### What is the ASCOT SCT4 data-entry tool?

The data-entry tool supplements the ASCOT SCT4 instrument. The data-entry tool is an MS Excel file that generates social care-related quality of life (SCRQoL) scores for each individual. These scores are calculated from data entered from the ASCOT SCT4 questionnaire by the user. The ASCOT SCT4 preference weights are programmed into the file. Upon entering data, a SCRQoL score for each participant is automatically calculated. The tool also produces a summary of the distribution of responses to each ASCOT SCT4 question (frequencies and percentages) and charts.

### Do I have to pay for the ASCOT SCT4 data-entry tool?

Yes, the data-entry tool is chargeable at £50 per user or site (e.g. care home). A service provider who wishes to use ASCOT and the data-entry tools in their care homes will be required to purchase a data-entry tool for each site (care home). Using one data-entry tool at multiple sites will be treated as a breach of the licence agreement, and may incur appropriate legal action from the Licensor – the University of Kent. You will be given access to Kent Shop, where you will be able to purchase the tool online upon approval of your registration form, which grants the licence to use the ASCOT tool.

### **Do I have to agree to any conditions when using ASCOT?**

Yes. Terms and conditions are part of the registration process and you will be required to agree to them when completing the registration form. The terms and conditions can be found on the ASCOT website: [www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot](http://www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot).

### **Can I make changes to the question order or wording?**

No. The wording of the questions and responses has undergone extensive cognitive testing to ensure they are reliable. Making changes to these will jeopardise the reliability and integrity of the tool.

### **Can I add my own questions to yours and call this a new measure?**

No. Any use of the ASCOT questions or tools must acknowledge our copyright and intellectual property. If you include the ASCOT in a questionnaire with other questions, you are required to reference this accordingly. This requirement forms part of terms and conditions of use, to which you be required to agree in order to access ASCOT tools. You can find a guide on how to reference ASCOT on the ASCOT website: [www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot](http://www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot).

### **Can I put the ASCOT SCT4 questions into a longer interview?**

Yes. Users sometimes ask other questions alongside SCT4 to help them understand their data. For example, SCT4 is used in the annual Adult Social Care Survey (ASCS) (<http://content.digital.nhs.uk/socialcare/usersurveys>). Here the nine SCT4 questions are placed alongside demographic, satisfaction and ADL (activities of daily living questions) questions. We would also strongly advise that you keep the ASCOT questions as a block of questions and do not change their order. You will be asked to tell us how you plan to use the ASCOT questions during the registration process.

### **Do I need to use all the ASCOT SCT4 questions?**

No. You are free to use only the questions that are of use to you. However, without a full set of questions it is not possible to calculate a full score for current SCRQoL. Please inform us if you only plan to use a selection of the questions when completing the registration form.

### **Do I need training before I use ASCOT SCT4?**

While we do run a one-day introduction to ASCOT training course which covers SCT4, it is possible to administer the self-completion survey without training. Details of training courses can be found on our website ([www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot](http://www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot)). Alternatively, watch our videos on the ASCOT website: [www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot](http://www.pssru.ac.uk/ascot).

### **What support is available to me if I use ASCOT SCT4?**

We are not funded to provide support for ASCOT, beyond what is available on our website and the training courses advertised. If you need further support, please contact the University of Kent's Innovation and Enterprise team about your requirements and they will

liaise with the appropriate member of the ASCOT team regarding consultancy options ([entcontracts@kent.ac.uk](mailto:entcontracts@kent.ac.uk)). Please include **ASCOT** in the subject line of your email to ensure it reaches the correct person.

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