

Practice Briefing 5
Using the *National Practice Model III*:
Analysing Information using the *Resilience Matrix*

This is the fifth in a series of Practice Briefings that have been written to help practitioners and managers put *Getting it right for every child* into practice in their agencies. The Practice Briefings should be read in conjunction with the Scottish Government's *Guide to Getting it right for every child (2008)*, the *Guide to implementing Getting it right for every child (2010)*, and the *Getting it right for every child Evaluation Themed Briefings (2010)*, all of which can be found on the *Getting it right for every child* website. www.scotland.gov.uk/gettingitright

The *Guide to Getting it right for every child (2008)* spells out the Values and Principles of the approach, the key roles, the Core Components and the *National Practice Model*. These practice briefings are designed to provide further information on the roles of the *Named Person* and the *Lead Professional* and more detail on how to use the *National Practice Model*, including when children may be in need of compulsory measures. Further briefings will be added as *Getting it right for every child* becomes embedded and practice examples from across Scotland become available.

The Practice Briefings

Practice Briefing 1. The role of the *Named Person*

Practice Briefing 2. The role of the *Lead Professional*

Practice Briefing 3. Using the *National Practice Model I*: Identifying concerns using the *Well-being Indicators*

Practice Briefing 4. Using the *National Practice Model II*: Gathering information with the *My World Triangle*

Practice Briefing 5. Using the *National Practice Model III*: Analysing information with the *Resilience Matrix*

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Making sense of information

Any assessment is likely to have used information from several sources and a lot of information may have been gathered. Making sense of that information is a crucial next step before making a plan for action. Analysis is often missed out in assessments but is a critical part of understanding what all the information means. Careful analysis and interpretation of assessment information is essential to enable practitioners:

- to identify need or difficulties
- to explain why these have happened
- to understand the impact of strengths and pressures on an individual child
- to help children and families and the practitioners working with them agree what needs to change
- to describe desired outcomes against which changes can be measured.
- to construct the Child's Plan.

The *Resilience Matrix* allows the practitioner to take the strengths and pressures identified from gathering information using the *My World Triangle*, along with any specialist assessments, and to group that information within the four headings of resilience, vulnerability, protective environment and adversity. The concept of resilience is fundamental to children's well-being and is used in assessments by practitioners from many agencies. A well known definition of resilience is, 'Normal development under difficult conditions' (Fonagy *et al.* 1994)¹.

Many children who need additional help are experiencing difficult conditions. This may relate to their health, their progress at school or what is happening in their family or community. A resilience-based approach fits closely with the aim of *Getting it right for every child* to build on the strengths in the child's whole world, always drawing on what the family, community and universal services can offer.

¹ Fonagy, P., Steele, H., Higgitt, A. and Target, M. (1994) The Emmanuel Miller Memorial Lecture 1992: 'The theory and practice of resilience', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 35, 2, 231-257.

See also paper on resilience by Helm on the GIRFEC website: www.scotland.gov.uk/gettingitright

Focusing on the positives and the strengths in a child's life is likely to help to improve outcomes by building a protective network around children (Daniel and Wassell 2002)². At the same time, it is always important to be alert to whether any adversity or vulnerability is putting children's well-being at risk and make sure this is taken into account. Home is important but so too is what is going on in the rest of a child's world. School and spare-time activities, for example can provide opportunities for enhancing resilience.

In their three workbooks on assessing and promoting resilience in vulnerable children, Daniel and Wassell describe the protective factors that are associated with long term social and emotional well-being in the child's whole world.

The existence of protective factors can help to explain why one child may cope better with adverse life events than another. The level of individual resilience can be seen as falling on a dimension of resilience and vulnerability. (See Figure 1.)



Figure 1. Dimension on which individual resilience can be located

This dimension is usually used to refer to intrinsic qualities of an individual. Some children are more intrinsically resilient than others because of a whole range of factors. For example, an 'easy' temperament is associated with resilience in infancy.

A further dimension for the understanding of individual differences is that of protective and adverse environments; this dimension covers extrinsic factors and is therefore located in the parts of the My World Triangle that are concerned with wider family, school and community. Examples of protective environment might include a supportive adult in a child's wider world, such as a teacher or youth leader, or a grandparent (see Figure 2).

² Daniel, B. and Wassell, S. (2002) *Assessing and Promoting Resilience in Vulnerable Children, volumes 1, 2 and 3*, London and Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd.

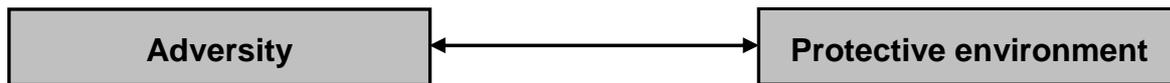


Figure 2. Dimension on which external factors of resilience around the young person can be located

When considered together, these dimensions provide a framework for the assessment of adverse and positive factors in every part of the *My World Triangle* (see Figure 3).

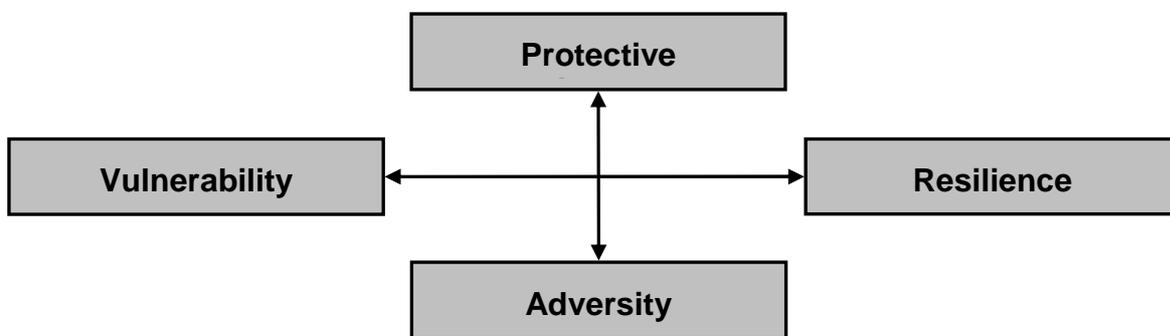


Figure 3. Framework for the assessment of resilience factors

The two dimensions will interact, and an increase in protective factors will help to boost a child's individual resilience.³

Daniel and Wassell do point out that resilience is a complex issue and that nothing can be taken for granted when assessing how resilient a child is. Although pointers to resilience may be present these have always to be taken in the context of an individual child's situation. For example, some children may appear on the surface to be coping well with adversity, but they may be feeling very stressed internally (Daniel and Wassell 2002, p.12). This is why it is important to get to know a child during the

³ Adapted from Daniel and Wassell, (2002) *Assessing and Promoting Resilience in Vulnerable Children Vols. 1, 2 & 3*, London & Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd. See also: Daniel, B., Wassell, S. and Gilligan, R. (1999) *Child Development for Child Care and Child Protection Workers*, London and Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd.

process of assessment and also why views of the child from different adults in their world are so valuable. There are many factors associated with resilience, but Gilligan (1997)⁴ suggests that there are three fundamental building blocks of resilience:

1. A secure base whereby the child feels a sense of belonging and security.
2. Good self esteem, that is an internal sense of worth and competence.
3. A sense of self efficacy, that is a sense of mastery and control, along with an accurate understanding of personal strengths and limitations.

How can *the Resilience Matrix* be used in *Getting it right for every child*?

Practitioners will have gathered information around the *My World Triangle* and may also have more specialist information about certain aspects of an individual child's well-being. It is important to see every child in a family as an individual because each child may experience the same conditions in a very different way.

For some children it is enough to use the *Resilience Matrix* as a mind map to help practitioners make sense of the information and to plan what needs to happen next to improve a child's circumstances.

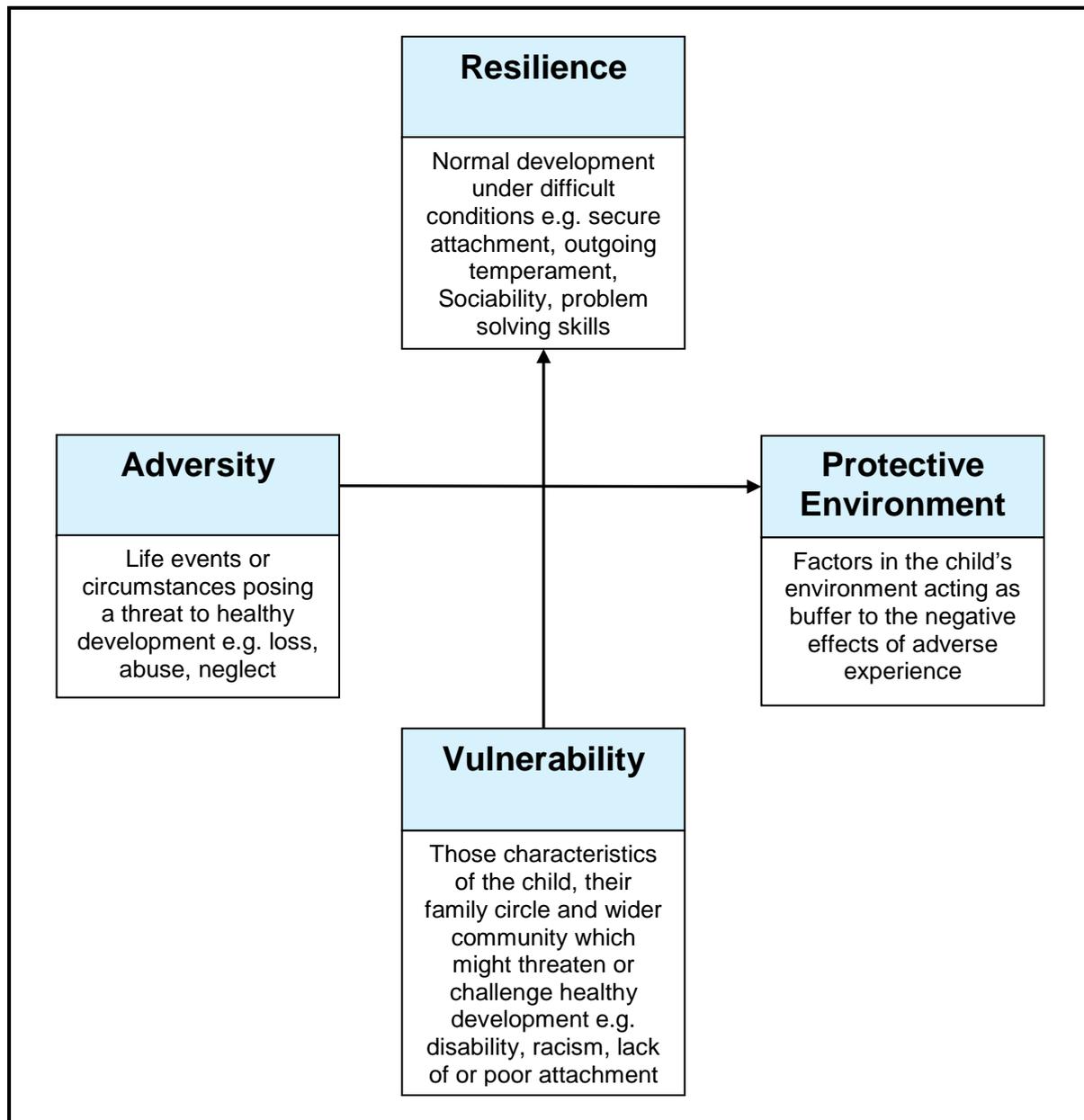
For other children who are experiencing more complex difficulty, practitioners have often found it helpful to make sense of this information to identify resilience and vulnerability, as well as adversity and protective factors by taking a blank matrix and 'plotting' on this matrix the strengths and pressures the child is experiencing in relation to the two sets of factors at each point of the matrix.

Along the axis of adversity and the protective environment, all the factors that provide strengths in the environment, such as the child getting on well at school, should be placed from the centre along the protective environment axis. Likewise, all the factors in the environment which are causing adversity, such as insufficient money or a dangerous neighbourhood, should be placed from the centre along the adversity axis.

⁴ Gilligan, R. (1997) 'Beyond Permanence? The importance of resilience in child placement practice and planning', *Adoption and Fostering*, 2, 1, 12-20.

The same process can be repeated for factors with the child that are likely to promote resilience and for those which are making a child vulnerable. Below is the template for the blank *Resilience Matrix*.

A Resilience Matrix for Analysing Information



The Resilience Matrix is adapted from The Child's World: Assessing Children in Need, Training and Development Pack (Department of Health, NSPCC and University of Sheffield 2000).

The content of the two axes are dynamic and will change over time. Children's resilience will be affected by what happens to the adults with whom they live. It will,

therefore, be important to try to predict how changes in the adults may affect the children. A good example would be kinship care. A grandparent may agree to take on a child but the circumstances could be influenced by future events, such as the ease of management of contact visits from parents. Or a grandparent may have underestimated the pressure a young child would bring to the household emotionally and financially. Predicting possible trajectories for a child will help to make sure contingencies are built in to preserve a child's protective environment. If these contingencies are not considered, a child's resilience could be weakened by subsequent adverse events.

Using professional judgement

There are some factors which may be both protective and also suggest vulnerability or adversity, e.g. removing an abuser from a domestic violence situation may be protective to both mother and child but can result in poverty which increases adversity. In making decisions about where to plot this information where the meanings may be not so straightforward, practitioners need to exercise judgement about how to make sense of these different aspects of information and weigh the competing influences. Judgement will be needed to weigh which factors are most important. It will also be helpful to look at the interactions between factors because this may also be a dimension that influences whether the impact is negative or positive.

Once these judgements have been made, it will be possible to see what needs to be done to help the child and family in order to strengthen protective factors and resilience, and reduce adversity and vulnerabilities. Achieving small improvements is a good way to accumulate success rather than having over-ambitious aims.

Having plotted the factors on the matrix and given some thought to the child's needs the desired outcomes for this child should be plotted against the eight well-being indicators of safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. Action may be needed against only some or against every indicator but the help has to be proportionate to the issues identified.

This analysis then forms the basis for discussion with the child, family and other practitioners on what should go into the *Child's Plan*. This will include what actions need to take place to improve protective factors and resilience, what needs to happen to reduce adversity and vulnerability and who is going to carry out those actions.

Reviewing a child's progress will be an essential part of a child's plan. In some circumstances, especially in complex cases, it will be useful to revisit the *Resilience Matrix* in reviewing the child's progress.

Getting it right for every child team

Scottish Government

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