

Risk, resilience and protective factors

When using the Continuum of needs (**Windscreen**), it is important that **protective** and **resilience** factors are considered as well as the risk factors. Not only are children's experiences relevant to their development but other factors within individual children, such as temperament, personality and gender all influence the way they are likely to react to experiences of their families and the environment in which they are growing up. The Department of Health in *Assessing Children in Need and their Families: Practice Guidance* identifies that children vary widely in the way they may respond to a set of circumstances. Some children may do well even in the most adverse circumstances while others appear to have little capacity to cope with small amounts of stress. It is therefore important to understand what may act as protective factors in children's lives and what may be stressors or vulnerabilities.

Protective factors may include:		
Individual:	Family:	Community:
Resilient temperament Autonomy, comprising a sense of identity, achievement, self awareness and independence Self-motivation	Strong and affectionate relationships with both parents, family members, other significant adults Recognition and praise: including parental interest, and involvement in education Stability and security in family life	Active involvement in school and community life; access to high quality early years education Supportive relationships outside the home Pro-social peer group
Risk Factors may include:		
Individual:	Family:	Community:
Troublesome behaviour in school/home, difficult behaviour Friends condoning or involved in risky behaviour Low educational achievement Truancy/exclusion Homelessness Bullying High rates of attendance in accident and emergency units Alcohol and drug use Poor nutrition Smoking Depression Low self-esteem	Lax parental supervision Parental (or other family member) abuse and/or neglect of child(ren), inconsistent and violent discipline Domestic violence, family conflict Paternal criminal convictions Children have poor or no relationship with one or both parents Having refugee status Being socially isolated	Inadequate housing Disadvantaged neighbourhood, indicated by a significant proportion of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minority ethnic families ▪ Families with four or more children ▪ Families where mothers are 16-24 ▪ Lone parent families ▪ Workless households ▪ Low income families ▪ Transient families

Specific developmental delays Learning difficulty and/or disability Speech/communication problems Physical illness especially chronic and/or neurological		
<p>In addition, practice suggests that the following groups of children and young people may be at risk of negative outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children and young people missing from school roll ▪ Families with low basic skills ▪ Babies with low birth weight ▪ Disabled children and young people ▪ Children and young people who are caring for another family member ▪ Children and young people in public care ▪ Those with parents, carers or other family member misusing drugs or alcohol ▪ Asylum seeker children and young people ▪ Those with experience of acrimonious family breakdown, including contact disputes 		

Resilience

Factors promoting resilience in the early years		
In the ante-natal period:	During infancy:	During the pre-school period:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adequate maternal nutrition throughout pregnancy ▪ Avoidance of maternal and passive smoking ▪ Moderate maternal alcohol consumption ▪ Maternal MMR vaccination ▪ Social support to mothers from partners, family and external networks ▪ Good access to ante-natal care ▪ Interventions to prevent domestic violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adequate parental income ▪ Social support to moderate peri-natal stress ▪ Good quality housing ▪ Parent education ▪ Safe play area and provision of learning materials ▪ Breast feeding to three months ▪ Support from male partners ▪ Continuous home based input from health and social care services, lay or professional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High quality pre-school day care ▪ Preparatory work with parents on home-school links ▪ Pairing with resilient peers ▪ Availability of alternative caregivers ▪ Food supplements ▪ Links with other parents, local community networks and faith groups ▪ Community regeneration initiatives

Factors promoting resilience in the middle years

- Reception classes that are sufficiently flexible to accommodate a range of cultural and community specific behaviours
- Creation and maintenance of home-school links for at-risk children and their families which can promote parental confidence and engagement
- Positive school experiences; academic, sports or friendship related
- Good and mutually trusting relationships with teachers
- The development of skills, opportunities for independence and mastery of tasks
- Structured routines, and a perception by the child that praise and sanctions are being administered fairly
- In abusive settings, the opportunity to maintain or develop attachments to the non-abusive parent, other family member or failing these, a reliable unrelated adult; maintenance of family routines and rituals
- Manageable contributions to the household which promote competencies, self-esteem and problem-solving coping
- In situations of marital discord, attachment to one parent, moderation of parental disharmony and opportunities to play a positive role in the family
- Help to resolve minor but chronic stressors as well as acute adversities
- Provision of breakfast and after-school clubs
- Stable accommodation

Factors promoting resilience in adolescence and early adulthood

- Continuity of teacher-child and peer relationships
- Programmes that encourage emotional literacy
- Inclusive philosophies that promote positive motivational styles, problem solving coping and discourage 'learned hopelessness'
- Opportunities to develop valued skills through broad based curricula
- Programmes which encourage peer cooperation and collaboration
- Avoidance of unnecessary labelling, a role for young people in negotiating family rules, and support of external role models or mentors
- Social support for parents and enhancement of children's problem solving capacity
- Connections with cultural or faith communities
- Where parental separation occurs, opportunity to maintain familiar social rituals
- Reduction of moves in care
- Emphasis in schools on educational achievement for vulnerable children
- Positive peer relationships
- Opportunities for young people to influence their environments
- Improve locus of control through valued household tasks or roles, part-time work outside the home, or volunteering
- Where low levels of social capital are present, early engagement with post-school options and active exposure to the full range of post-school opportunities
- Supportive social networks, prevention of social isolation, and registration with GP and dentist when living away from home for first time

- Opportunities to enter and be supported in the job market, and help to consider alternative options
- Where family support is weak, the involvement of supportive adults or mentors throughout and beyond the transitional period

Factors promoting resilience in all phases of the lifecycle

- Strong social support networks
 - The presence of at least one unconditionally supportive parent or parent substitute
 - A committed mentor or other person from outside the family
 - Positive school experiences
 - A sense of mastery and a belief that one's own efforts can make a difference
 - Participation in a range of extra-curricular activities
 - The capacity to re-frame adversities so that the beneficial as well as the damaging effects are recognised
 - The ability – or opportunity – to “make a difference” by helping others through part time work
- Not to be excessively sheltered from challenging situations which provide opportunities to develop coping skills

