Good Practice Guidance
Appendix 6

Guidance on using the Resilience Matrix
Resilience can be defined as:

‘Normal development under difficult conditions’ (Fonagy et al 1994).

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.)

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 an adult in a child’s wider world, such as a teacher or youth leader, or a grandparent (see Figure 2).
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).

The two dimensions will interact, and an increase in protective factors will help to boost a child’s individual resilience. ¹

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 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) suggests that there are three fundamental building block 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.

One way practitioners have found helpful to make sense of this information and identify resilience and vulnerability, as well as adversity and protective factors is to take a blank matrix and ‘plot’ 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. Yellow ‘post-its’ are a good way of writing down and grouping the information.

Along the axis of adversity and the protective environment, all the factors that provide strengths in the environment, such as the child getting in 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.

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*. 
There are some factors which may be both protective and also suggest vulnerability or 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 and possible actions, the needs and actions can be plotted briefly against the eight well-being indicators of safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. Action may not be needed against every indicator and 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 needs to be done and who is going to do it.

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

References


## The Resilience – Vulnerability Matrix

### Low Strength / High Concern

- Young person has poor communication skills.
- Young person has no support / is rejected by parents / carers.
- Young Person is excluded from school.
- Isolated family.
- Absence of supportive / structured living environment.
- Parents / carers unable to supervise.
- Family enmeshed in unhealthy social network.
- Family has high levels of stress.
- History of unresolved significant abuse in family.
- Family refuses to engage with professionals.
- Domestic violence in family.
- Diagnosis of conduct disorder or a history of inter personal aggression.
- Children may present violent or aggressive behaviour.
- High levels of family dysfunction / abusive or harsh child rearing regime.
- High levels of trauma, such as abuse or witnessing domestic violence.

### High Strength / Low Concern

- No history of significant trauma or abuse.
- Young person demonstrates remorse / empathy.
- Healthy peer relationships.
- No documented school problems.
- No history of behavioural / emotional problems.

- Young person has positive plans / goals
- Young person has positive talents and interests.
- Young person has good problem solving and negotiating skills.
- Young person has at least one emotional confidant.
- Young person has positive relationships with school.
- Young person has experienced consistent positive care.
- Parents demonstrate good protective attitudes and behaviours.
- Family has clear, positive boundaries in place.
- Family demonstrate good communication.
- Family demonstrate ability to positively process emotional issues.
- Family is positive about receiving help.
- Young person lives in supportive environment.