Using the Resilience Matrix

How to use this Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to offer support to you, as you assess and plan supports for vulnerable children.

You must make sure that you always consider the strengths and positives in a child’s life and that the child or young person and their family are at the centre of your thinking ensuring that any and all interventions are timely, appropriate and proportionate.

The agreed local model of intervention which is detailed here is based on the national model, it includes two designated roles for practitioners along with a number of core components that when combined deliver an integrated, multi agency support process for children and their family or carers.

You should read selected section(s) for the additional information that you would like.

The document is not designed to be read from start to finish.
Using the Resilience Matrix

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.

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.

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 them. 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.

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.

This dimension is usually used to refer to the 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).
When these two dimensions are considered together, they provide a framework for the assessment of adverse and positive factors in every part of the My World Triangle (see Figure 3).

![Framework for the assessment of resilience factors.](https://www.aberdeengettingitright.org.uk)

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 seen in the context of the 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. 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 it is suggested 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?

Firstly gather as much information as is possible using the My World Triangle including any specialist assessment 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 information to identify resilience and vulnerability, as well as adversity and protective factors by taking a blank matrix and ‘plotting’ onto this matrix the strengths and pressures the child is experiencing in relation to the two sets of factors.

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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resilience</th>
<th>Adversity</th>
<th>Protective Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal development under difficult conditions, secure attachment, outgoing temperament, sociability, problem solving skills.</td>
<td>Life events or circumstances posing a threat to healthy development eg. loss, abuse, neglect.</td>
<td>Factors in the child’s environment acting as buffer to the negative effects of adverse experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 that 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 in making 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 as this may influence 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.