

Keeping Our Eye on the Child



**WHAT HELPS THE BURDENED
PRACTITIONER?**

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- What frameworks, tools and systems support us in thinking analytically about the child's predicament?
- Focus on Looked-After children and young people at home and in kinship, foster, residential and adoptive care
- 3 key theoretical frameworks as threads through analysis and care planning

Attachment Theory-Attribution Theory-Resilience Theory

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GETTING IT RIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD

- Helpful tools within the overall framework
- Use of the Wellbeing Indicators:
 - a) To identify concerns
 - b) As a tool for direct work with children and families (Angus Council)
 - c) Helpful in defining goals in care planning
 - d) Monitoring progress when reviewing Child's Plan

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USE OF THE MY WORLD TRIANGLE

- Vehicle for use by universal and more specialist services for collecting information and identifying gaps/discrepancies
- Helping to identify the need for wider consultation with other professionals/family members

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THE FIVE KEY QUESTIONS

1. What is getting in the way of this child or young person's wellbeing?
2. Do I have all the information I need to help this child or young person?
3. What can I do now to help this child or young person?
4. What can my agency do to help this child or young person?
5. What additional help, if any, may be needed from others?

Helpful if agency paperwork is refined rather than bolted on to previous written frameworks

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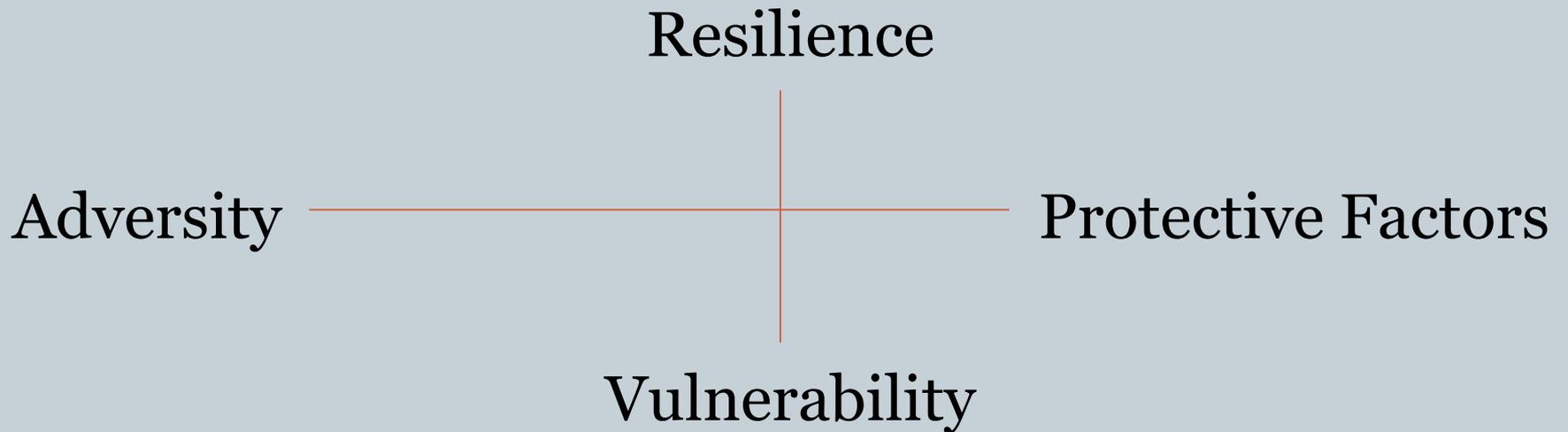
USE OF THE RESILIENCE MATRIX

- Helpful in supporting **analysis** and clarifying the focus in **planning interventions**
- Especially useful in Meetings Around the Child in complex circumstances or those which generate acute concern or uncertainty for Looked-After children, either at home or away from home

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STRUCTURING ANALYSIS



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1. VULNERABILITY

- Qualities or characteristics of the child or young person, eg: temperament, aptitudes, illness, specific learning needs, disabilities
- The nature of parent or carer's expectations
- The influence of parents' past experiences
- The impact of past adversities on the child/young person

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ANALYSIS

- The focus is most helpfully on considering the balance of factors under each heading, which are pertinent to **this** child's circumstances, **now**
- The idea is not to plot the child's position on the matrix
- If used in inter-agency discussion, helpful in generating a child's plan, which is shared
- Is it clear who takes authority?
- How is that decided?

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WHAT HELPS THE PRACTITIONER?

- Sound knowledge of child development – helps in identifying accurately delayed, distorted or uneven development in forming accurate assessment
- Practitioners in universal services possess refined skills in this area
- Open-minded, curious approach to possible **causes** of delay
- Useful to generate a range of hypotheses which can be tested

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- Measuring developmental progress, or lack of it, is a key issue in work with vulnerable children and young people looked after at home
- Neglect is a crucial concern in adolescence as well as young children (Stein)
- Starting point in identifying key elements of healing/re-parenting needed
- What are the mechanisms in each agency for integrating research findings into practice?

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SKILLS IN UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING ATTACHMENT THEORY

Useful Questions in Assessment and Observation of Child-Parent Interaction

1. Does the parent pick up the child's signals and respond? How?
2. Does the parent reach out to the child? How?
3. Does the child respond to the parent's initiatives? How?
4. Does the child signal their needs to the parent? How?

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- Useful for assessing the nature of the attachment relationship and identifying strengths and gaps in interaction
- Helps to structure focused work on parenting
- Additional framework for analysing parenting initiatives and responses

Sensitivity	←—————→	Insensitivity
Cooperation	←—————→	Interference
Acceptance	←—————→	Rejection
Responsiveness	←—————→	Ignoring

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GHOSTS IN THE NURSERY

- Process of reflection for parents on own early attachment experiences key aspect of parenting assessment, ref Change Is A Must – Perth and Kinross Council
- In some complex cases psychological assessment of adults vital to inform the focus and direction of work within the Child's Plan
 - Informs parents' learning style
 - Measures motivation
 - Identifies prognosis for successful change
 - Crucially considers the **impact** of the parents' childhood experiences on their own parenting capacity

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KNOWLEDGE OF THE IMPACT OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

- Use of National Risk Framework (Scottish Government 2012)
- Crucial to analyse the **impact** and meaning of life events, relationships and circumstances on the Looked-After child
- Consider the impact on:
 - Development
 - Behaviour
 - Attachment security
 - Self-esteem

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- Use of the Resilience Matrix alongside the following questions:
 - a) Identify the factors relevant to the child's predicament **now** under each heading
 - b) Identify any gaps in the available information and consider how it may be sourced
 - c) What is it we are most worried will happen? In what circumstances might it happen? How likely is it to happen? How bad would it be if it happened – and for whom?
 - d) In what order of priority would you place multiple factors elevating the risk of harm?

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- **Then:**
 - a) Think of all the possible options for action
 - b) Describe potential benefits and disadvantages of each
 - c) Describe the preferred option, explaining the reasons why
 - d) Identify what needs to be in place if a less preferred option is the only one available

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CLARIFYING THE CHILD'S PREDICAMENT

1. What has happened to this child?
2. What are the **messages** to the child in these life events, circumstances, relationships?
3. What patterns of:
 - a) Attachment behaviour and/or
 - b) Patterns of unusual/testing or withdrawn behaviour do we see?
4. What is the child communicating?
5. What messages do **we** want to give the children?

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6. How might we communicate these messages?
 - a) In nurturing routines?
 - b) In behaviour management strategies
 - c) In direct work with the child? Skills in communicating with children need to be valued, nurtured and supported in developing a coherent story with the child.
 - d) In family work? Written agreements which are transparent, fair and which involve a consultative, collaborative process, with a focus on unmet needs of the child (Fife Council).
 - e) In purposeful plans for contact for separated children?
 - What is/are the **purposes** of contact for this child?
 - Do the arrangements match the purposes?
 - What **messages** are communicated – in words or demeanour?
 - What is the **impact** before/during/after?
 - What might contact **mean** to this child?

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ANALYSIS OF FAMILY HISTORY/CHRONOLOGY

- Vital importance of assessing social and relationship histories of parents and the quality of the child's early attachments in cases where significant concerns arise (ref. Brandon)
- What does this **mean** for this child's wellbeing?
- Unless there is a high chance of safe care at home, residential placement, especially at a distance of parents and child, not advisable (ref. Glaser)

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WHAT DOES THE PRACTITIONER NEED TO REMAIN RESILIENT?

1. Regular relationship-based supervision (ref. Morrison)
2. Opportunities for professionals from different agencies to train together in order to work together (Forth Valley Child Protection Consortium)
3. Consultation from outwith the circle around the child, eg: child care consultant from social work or psychiatry
4. Close links with CAMHS eg: Edinburgh Connect
5. Borders Consultation meetings RE permanence cases
6. Consultation to foster carers (Dumfries and Galloway)
7. A management culture which prioritises Looked-After children and permanence

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COLLABORATION AT SENIOR MANAGERIAL LEVEL RE BASIC RESOURCES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

- Provision of family-friendly contact venues
- Local residential facilities for intensive assessment and parenting work of young children in particular
- Inter-agency collaboration over adult assessment resources, eg: psychologists for assessing parents
- Development of concurrent planning - recruitment and effective support of concurrent placements
- Therapeutic resources – therapy and consultation for kinship and foster carers

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- Local initiatives to enhance Children's Panel members' understanding of:
 - a) organisational processes in decision making
 - b) impact of abuse and neglect
 - c) impact of family contact
 - d) the benefits of permanence
- Inter-agency training initiatives involving Children's Panel members and Sheriffs at a local level (Inverclyde Council and City of Edinburgh Council)