Children and Families Thinking Tool: Risk in the Community

Essex County Council

Children and Families Thinking Tool: Risk in the Community

Using this Thinking Tool can improve the quality of your assessment skills by considering all the factors leading to exploitation.

It will help you to:

• Think about the way you work with young people

• Identify key issues when thinking about risk

• Consider both the young person and their network

• Consider culture, identity, race, ethnicity and religion

06 Professional network

01 Child/young person

05 Peer network

Think holistically and consider strengths, risks and impacts for each context and what removes this from normal adolescent behaviour

02 Family

04 Community and neighbourhood

03 Education

Child/young person
Their story, who they are and what is important to them

Family
Their story families view of their circumstances

Education
Their experience of education and schools experiences with them

Community and neighbourhood
Where do the family and young person fit?

Peer network
What is the yp's position in their peer group both real and virtual and percieved and how this impacts on their life

Professional network
Who is already involved in this family and are you the best person to intervene at this point?

It is important to understand the differences between vulnerabilities, risks to the young person and risk to others.

This is a non-exhaustive list:

Vulnerability

- Poor mental health
- Domestic abuse
- NEET
- Online activity
- Home area
- Missing episodes
- Peer group
- Exclusion
- Substance use in the family

Risk to young person

- Frequent missing episodes
- Concerns over area they frequent
- Concerns over peer group
- Concerns over relationship
- Substance/alchohol abuse

Potential risk to others

- Frequent missing episodes
- Concerns over area they frequent
- Concerns over peer group associations
- Concerns over relationship/harmful sexual behavior
- Concerns over online activity

Key reminders

Be mindful of the impact of your language.

Peer networks often have as equal importance as their family.

Consider the impact of physical safeguarding as well as what we can do.

Young people don't always acknowledge or recognise that they are being exploited.

Always remember the young person can be victim and a perpetrator.

Be curious ask yourself, what does this child need us to do to achieve change for them?

Thinking Tool: Risk in the Community

Risk in the Community occurs when there is a person/group willing to exploit the vulnerabilities of a child/young person and or family. It is important to consider that putting the emphasis on the child/young person or family for being responsible for managing this vulnerability and removing themselves from risk does not address the risk posed by the perpetrator and therefore the abuse. Addressing Risk in the Community requires us to identify where the vulnerabilities and risk lay and who has a role in safeguarding against these risks.

The Thinking Tool sets out a series of prompts to consider, in thinking about how to identify vulnerabilities and risks to a child/young person and family around Risk in the Community. This supporting sheet provides further details of prompts relating to the contexts you will need to address.

Child/young person
- What are the concerns?
- What does normal look like for this child/young person?
- Do we have a good understanding of their lived experiences, routines, culture and identity?
- What is going on for the young person
- How do they fit into the family?
- Is there any historical trauma?
- Who influences the young person?
- Who does the child/young person have influence over?
- Who is important to them?
- Is the young person a victim, perpetrator or both?
- Consider adolescent brain development, risk-taking is a normal part of development (how can this need be met without the young person being at significant risk of harm?)
- Consider vulnerability, social isolation and discrimination

Education
- Where are they educated?
- What is their experience of education?
- Is education working for them?

- How is education supporting child/young person's engagement?
- Who are the young persons 'go to' person at their education?

Peer network
- Be careful not to undermine the importance of peer relationships for teenagers
- Who is the peer network?
- Where does the child young person fit into their peer network?
- Do they have a social media network?
- Are there concerns for any other individuals in their peer network

Family
- What is the family worried about?
- What is the families understanding of the concerns?
- What patterns in the family history should we be looking out for?
- How does the family respond to child/young person?
- How are family responding to concerns?
- What is the family culture/norms have risks been normalised?
- What if any other issues are the family dealing with?
- What help do the family want?

Race, ethnicity, religion and cultural identity

- Ask the family to tell us about their racial heritage and background?

- How would the family describe their ethnicity?

- Does the family have any spiritual or religious beliefs, and what does this mean for the family in their day to day lives? (attending places of worship, religious celebrations and festivals, clothing, food, self-care, values)

- Does the family feel accepted within your community? What contributes to this?

- Have the children in the family ever been treated poorly because of race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender, class or spiritual/religious beliefs – what has been the impact of this for you and your family?

- What do you think is important to understand about family values and beliefs?

- What has the family experience been of moving/migrating into or across the UK?

- Practice Consideration: How have factors such as poverty, deprivation, housing, income, class impacted upon this family?

Community and neighbourhood

- What is the young person's community?

- Who do they associate with?

- Where do they go

- Where do they fit in?

- What is happening in the area causing or contributing to the problem?

Professional network

- Who is already working with peer network?

- Who is already working with the child/young person and family?

- Who is the best person to be working with the young person and family? Who are they most likely to build a positive working relationship with? If it is not a professional, is there anybody in the young person's family/friends network who they look to?

- What needs to happen in community environments to make positive changes and who is responsible?

- What disruption tactics can be employed to address risk and who is responsible?

- What additional support can be out in place for child/family?

When speaking with young people/families and professionals be mindful of the impact of your language: Where are you placing the blame and responsibility for the abuse?

- Try not to use language implying that the child or young person is complicit in any way, or responsible for the crimes that have happened or may happen to them. "Putting themselves at risk" implies that the child is responsible for the risks presented by the perpetrator and that they are able to make free and informed choices

- Your records should reflect the presence of coercion and the lack of control young people have in abusive or exploitative situations and must recognise the severity of the impact exploitation has on the child or young person "Involved in CSE" implies there is a level of choice regarding the child being abused

- Victim-blaming language can reinforce messages from perpetrators around shame and guilt. This in turn may prevent the child or young person from disclosing their abuse, through fear of being blamed by professionals/parents

- When victim-blaming language is used amongst professionals, there is a risk of normalising and minimising the child's experience, resulting in a lack of appropriate response

"To get an understanding of what's going on you need at some point to talk to us, one reason we find it hard to talk is the way you respond to us and the language you use when talk to us and how you talk and write about us. Using the right language makes a big difference, it impacts how professionals respond and support young people and how we feel about ourselves"

Young person from Choices group