

Risk Analysis guidance sheet

Questions to answer for the Risk Analysis

- What are the risk and protective factors in this child's situation?
(Consider the Child's Developmental Needs, Family and Environmental Factors, Parenting Capacity)
- Which of these factors are likely to be most significant for the child in terms of reducing / increasing the child's well-being and the probability of future harm?
- Estimate the level of risk of to the child's well-being which there appears to be present for the child and the probability of future harm
- What are the likely outcomes of this for the child?
- What needs to change if this level of risk is to be reduced?

Risk factors are defined as those factors in the child's world which are likely to increase the likelihood of harm occurring/recurring.

Protective factors are those factors in the child's world that may be seen as containing a protective component for the child – they are likely to counteract the impact of the identified risk factors, and diminish the risk of harm occurring/recurring.

“Which of these factors are likely to be most significant for the child in terms of reducing or increasing the probability of future harm?” Here, we need to appraise the relative strength of the risk and protective factors that have been identified, and assign weight to them. In other words, we assess how powerful each of these factors is likely to be, including their strength relative to each other.

“In each of the domains, both strengths and difficulties should be identified. Children's needs do not exist in a vacuum...and, therefore, the inter-relationships between the child, family and environment must be understood. Some factors will work positively to support children's growing up while others will mitigate against or undermine their healthy development (and safety). **In weighing up the impact that various factors have on the child, it has to be borne in mind that not all factors will have equal significance and the cumulative effect of some relatively minor factors may be considerable.**

Thus the analysis of a child's needs (and the possible threats to their safety) is a complex activity drawing on knowledge from research and practice combined with an understanding of the child's needs within his or her family (and the possible risks they may face)” (Department of Health 2000, Page 55).

The Risk Analysis invites us to use the overview of risk and protective factors to estimate the level of risk which therefore appears to be present for the child. On the basis of all the information available and our assessment of it, we seek to estimate the probability of future harm.

The Risk Analysis also invites us to assess the likely outcomes of this for the child. What are the likely consequences or costs for them in terms of their safety, health and development? (Knowledge, which professionals involved with the family, have of this particular child and more general knowledge of child development, child health and the possible impact of child abuse and neglect should be used to assess the likely outcomes for the child.) This information is used to assess what future harm may mean for this particular child.

At each stage of the risk analysis we need to ask: what evidence do we have to support them?

The last part of the Risk Analysis with the information available and the analysis undertaken will enable us to describe: What needs to change if this level of risk is to be reduced?

Considering the three domains of the Assessment Framework highlight the areas where change is needed. What needs to change in parenting capacity, family and environmental factors if the child is to be kept safe, experience healthy outcomes – i.e. their developmental needs are to be adequately met – and for them to no longer require a child action plan? Set a provisional estimate of the time-scales within which these changes need to occur should be made.

Based on Vic Tuck Risk Assessment Model