

## Helping children to build resilience

According to the DFE “Mental health and behaviour in schools’ (Nov 2018), there are risk factors and protective factors which can either damage or protect the mental health and wellbeing of our children.

Risk factors are cumulative. This means that children can experience a range of adverse childhood experiences, which left unchecked or unaddressed will significantly impact their ability to flourish. These can include social disadvantage, family trauma, or attention difficulties. Research has suggested that boys exposed to five or more risk factors are eleven times more likely to develop conduct disorder before the age of 10 than boys with no risk factors. Girls in a similar situation were nineteen times more likely to develop the disorder. These are worrying statistics.

There is hope, however, as there are factors which can support children to become more resilient in spite of their exposure to risk factors. These will in turn, support them to develop more positive mental health strategies as they move through life.

The table below, taken from the ‘Mental health and behaviour in schools’ report (Nov 2018) shows the risk and corresponding protective factors. It is my view that if we begin to see children in terms of their risk factors, we can begin to analyse their presenting behaviour on a much more therapeutic level.

	RISK FACTORS	PROTECTIVE FACTORS
In the child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Genetic influences</li> <li>- Low IQ and learning disabilities</li> <li>- Specific developmental delay or neuro-diversity</li> <li>- Communication difficulties</li> <li>- Difficult temperament</li> <li>- Physical Illness</li> <li>- Academic failure</li> <li>- Low self-esteem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secure attachment experience</li> <li>- Outgoing temperament as an infant</li> <li>- Good communication skills, social skills</li> <li>- Being a planner and having a belief in control</li> <li>- Humour</li> <li>- A positive attitude</li> <li>- Experiences of success and achievement</li> <li>- Faith or spirituality</li> <li>- Capacity to reflect</li> </ul>
In the family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overt parental conflict including domestic violence</li> <li>- Family breakdown (including where the children have been taken in to care or have been adopted)</li> <li>- Inconsistent/unclear discipline</li> <li>- Hostile/rejecting relationships</li> <li>- Failure to adapt to a child's changing needs</li> <li>- Abuse or neglect</li> <li>- Parental psychiatric illness</li> <li>- Parental criminality, alcoholism or personality disorder</li> <li>- Death or loss - including loss of friendship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At least one good parent-child relationship or supportive adult</li> <li>- Affection</li> <li>- Clear and consistent discipline</li> <li>- Support for education</li> <li>- Supportive long term relationship/ absence of discord</li> </ul>

<p>In the school</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bullying</li> <li>- Discrimination</li> <li>- Breakdown or lack of friendships</li> <li>- Deviant peer influences</li> <li>- Peer pressure</li> <li>- Peer on peer abuse</li> <li>- Poor pupil/school staff relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clear policies on behaviour and bullying</li> <li>- Staff behaviour policy</li> <li>- Open door policy for children to raise problems</li> <li>- A whole-school approach to promoting good mental health</li> <li>- Good pupil/school staff relationships</li> <li>- Positive classroom management</li> <li>- A sense of belonging</li> <li>- Positive peer influences</li> <li>- Positive friendships</li> <li>- Effective safeguarding policies</li> <li>- Effective early help</li> <li>- School works effectively as part of multi agency support</li> <li>- Appropriate procedures to ensure staff are confident to raise concerns and know that they will be dealt with fairly and effectively</li> </ul>
<p>In the community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Socio-economic disadvantage</li> <li>- Homelessness</li> <li>- Disaster, accidents, war or overwhelming events</li> <li>- Discrimination</li> <li>- Exploitation of any kind</li> <li>- Other significant life events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wider supportive network</li> <li>- Good housing</li> <li>- High standard of living</li> <li>- High morale school</li> <li>- Opportunities for valued social roles</li> <li>- Range of sport and leisure activities</li> </ul>