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Resilience

What is resilience -
coping or thriving?

Questions to ask ourselves
when working with young
people in transition.

This leaflet summarises key issues for practitioners working with young people identified at the Resilience Knowledge Exchange Seminar held on March 26th 2009 at the University of Stirling. The seminar was a joint venture between Scottish Social Networks Forum, The Rock Trust and The University of Stirling.

It was attended by twenty invited participants all of whom have experience and a particular interest in the area of resilience in children and young people and facilitated by Malcolm Hill, Research Professor at the Glasgow School of Social Work.

This leaflet is based on the valuable contributions from all who attended but particular thanks are due to Cheryl Burgess and Professor Brigid Daniel for the full report and to Allison Calder for this summary.



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rock trust
BECAUSE EVERY YOUNG
PERSON HAS POTENTIAL



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Why resilience?

The idea of resilience has captured the imagination of professionals and public alike - challenging and inspiring but also leading to confusion and disagreement. Crudely it is surviving adversity and experiencing well-being. The Resilience Knowledge Exchange critically analysed the underlying concepts and the implications for practice. The following "questions" summarise the key points from the seminar.

Questions to ask ourselves when working with young people

Adversity:

- What does adversity mean to the young people we work with?
- How would they define adversity?
- Do we assess support needs against an agreed list?
- What if the adversity the young person is experiencing is not on the list – can we help?
- Is the adversity the young person is experiencing societal/structural?
- Are they experiencing adversity because of decisions which have been made by others... housing....poverty....etc. It is important that a young person understands when something is bigger than them and can see they are not to blame, however 'I can't do anything about it' is a dangerous trap to fall into. How do we get the balance right?
- Is it more constructive to start discussions with young people by identifying well-being factors rather than those relating to adversity?

Wellbeing:

- How do we assess wellbeing?
- What language do we use?
- What do we do if the young person we support finds it difficult to express emotion?
- How can we support them to express themselves?
- Does wellbeing have to be articulated? Can it be demonstrated?
- Can we assess self efficacy or empathy and assume wellbeing?

Resilience:

- What is resilience, coping or thriving?
- Can we support young people to cope and encourage them to thrive?
- Does the young person have a secure base from which to explore the world and come back to?
- Are they reassured if they fail, and encouraged to learn for next time?
- Are we as workers a secure base?
- How do we allow young people to experience risk?
- How do we encourage and support them to experience personal adversity which they can overcome and use to build confidence and resilience?

Interventions:

- How do we move young people on?
- How do we support young people to make sustainable relationships away from us and find a new secure base?
- Where do we find positive role models for young people?
- When and how do we support the young person to make these connections, to build and maximise their social networks?
- Where are these connections to be found? In their community?
- How do we evaluate resilience based work which may not reap success for a young person for a number of years, or until adversity strikes again?

Training and Development:

- How do we feel about talking about resilience and resilience theory?
- Do we use it with other practitioners when assessing needs of young people?
- Are we confident in making the links between the theory and the interventions?
- How comfortable are we in involving the young people in this process?
- They are the experts in themselves.

Conclusion:

The Knowledge Exchange highlighted the impact of Resilience Theory in working with young people but also raised the question of how it is being used in practice. In answering some of these questions we hope that you have explored how your practice relates to resilience and wellbeing and how it can be used to focus on practical ways of problem solving and helping young people to develop social networks.

Further Information

For the full Resilience Knowledge Exchange report and further information on Resilience Theory and Training and help to find answers to these questions visit www.scottishsocialnetworks.org or email **Lesley Stenhouse** at info@scottishsocialnetworks.org



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