



Common Language training pack

What is risk?

Definitions

Risk	an aspect of the individual or their environment that predisposes some children to specific social or psychological problems
Epidemiology	the study of the causes, distribution and control of disease in populations

Further reading

Haggerty, R. (1994) 'Stress and coping: a unifying theme' in, Haggerty, R.J. et al (eds) **Stress, Risk and Resilience in Children and Adolescents: Processes, Mechanisms and Intervention**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Little, M., Axford, N. and Morpeth, L. (2000) 'Risk and Protection in the Context of Services for Children in Need', **Child and Family Social Work**, 9, 105-117.

- How risk is used in the context of epidemiology
- How risk can be used as a primary building block to making a prognosis, or prediction, or hypothesis about children's development
- How risk used in Common Language differs from the common application of the term in parts of children's services

Connections

connecting modules

- 'How to make a social history' - risk and prognosis are fundamental to this assessment process
- 'What is need?' - need is a snapshot of a pattern of risk and protective factors in a child's life
- 'What is threshold?' - threshold measures impairment to development; risk is focused on the chances of impairment
- 'What is life route and process?' - helps to understand how interpretations of risk by children, family members and professionals influence that risk



exercises with this lecture
 Exercise 1 - risk and protective factors
 Exercise 2 - chains of effect

the other lectures in this module
 'What are chains of effects?' - shows how risks combine and link
 'What are protective factors?' - shows how protective factors can reduce the impact of a risk by interrupting chains of effects

most relevant Practice Tools

Prediction has the fullest description of how risk is used in the Common Language and gives several illustrations of its application in the making of clinical assessments
Aggregating Data describes risk factors used in planning for improved children's services

In Common Language, the interest is in risks to aspects of a child's development. These can be direct, for example when poor hearing leads to speech delay (diagram 1), or indirect, as when the communication problems associated with poor hearing are translated into poor behaviour (diagram 2). All of the lines in these diagrams are hypotheses since although, for example, poor hearing elevates the risk of speech delay, many children with this risk go on to speak within the normal range. In other words, the links do not materialise for every child.

Diagram 1



Diagram 2



