

**Practice Briefing 4**  
**Using the *National Practice Model II*:**  
**Gathering information with the *My World Triangle***

This is the fourth in a series of Practice Briefings that have been written to help practitioners and managers put *Getting it right for every child* into practice in their agencies. The Practice Briefings should be read in conjunction with the Scottish Government's *Guide to Getting it right for every child (2008)*, the *Guide to implementing Getting it right for every child (2010)*, and the *Getting it right for every child Evaluation Themed Briefings (2010)*, all of which can be found on the *Getting it right for every child* website. [www.scotland.gov.uk/gettingitright](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/gettingitright)

The *Guide to Getting it right for every child (2008)* spells out the *Values and Principles* of the approach, the key roles, the *Core Components* and the *National Practice Model*. These practice briefings are designed to provide further information on the roles of the *Named Person* and the *Lead Professional* and more detail on how to use the *National Practice Model*, including when children may be in need of compulsory measures. Further briefings will be added as *Getting it right for every child* becomes embedded and practice examples from across Scotland become available.

**The Practice Briefings**

Practice Briefing 1. The role of the *Named Person*

Practice Briefing 2. The role of the *Lead Professional*

Practice Briefing 3. Using the *National Practice Model I*: Identifying concerns using the *Well-being Indicators*

Practice Briefing 4. Using the *National Practice Model II*: Gathering information with the *My World Triangle*

Practice Briefing 5. Using the *National Practice Model III*: Analysing information with the *Resilience Matrix*

Practice Briefing 6. Using the *National Practice Model IV*: The *Child's Plan*: one child, one plan

Practice Briefing 7. The contribution of *Getting it right for every child* to the Children's Hearings System

### **The *My World Triangle***

The main tool for assessing the current circumstances in the child's whole world will be the *My World Triangle*. Using this enables practitioners to assess strengths and pressures in all aspects of a child's life. The triangle is evidence-based and has been developed from a knowledge and research base of children's development.

### **Using the *My World Triangle* appropriately**

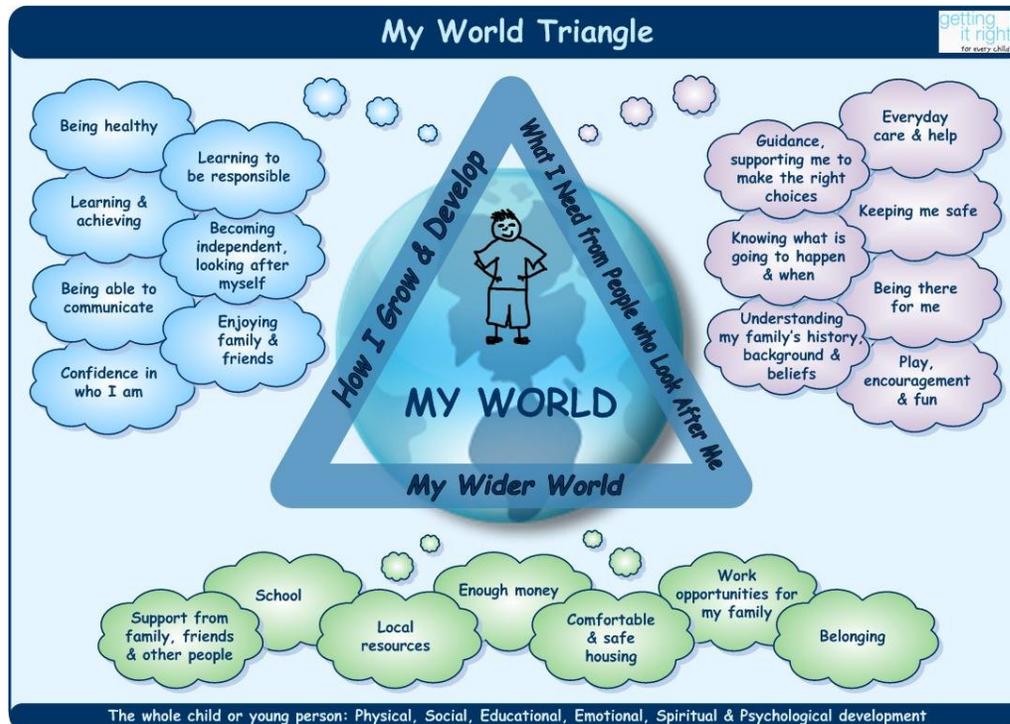
The *My World Triangle* will always be used to guide the gathering of information to understand what is happening to a child and his or her family. Children and families bring their contribution about what is happening in the child's world. If concerns about a child's safety or other serious issues have been identified and have led to a fuller assessment, then certain parts of the triangle will be explored in more depth, for example, the domain of 'What I need from the people who look after me. Or if a child is beginning to get into trouble in the community,, it will be useful to explore in depth what is happening in the child's wider environment (My wider world) as well as at home and at school.

In all cases, information will be divided into strengths and pressures on the child and family. Practitioners will need to think about all sides of the triangle in relation to a child, but it may not be necessary for an individual to gather detailed information on all sides of the triangle if this is not proportionate to the problem. Also, while all practitioners working with children should be informed about child development, *Getting it right for every child* recognises that different practitioners bring a knowledge base specific to their profession.

For example, the *My World Triangle* has now been included in the Scottish *Women-Held Maternity Record (SWHMR)*, and in the 'red book'<sup>1</sup>. Health visitors will have extensive knowledge of a young child and family but will not be expected to explore every domain of the triangle. However, they will find it useful to see any concerns they may have in the context of the whole child. Similarly the triangle is included in the curriculum for excellence and will be used proportionately by teachers

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.nhshealthyquality.org/nhsqis/3944.htm](http://www.nhshealthyquality.org/nhsqis/3944.htm)



The *My World Triangle* introduces a mental map which helps practitioners explore a child's experience and identify needs and risks to a child's well-being. These are recorded as strengths and pressures. Often there are interactions for a child between different parts of the child's whole world.

Many factors shape children's development throughout childhood, adolescence and beyond. Some factors are within the child, like those influenced by genetics, such as the colour of eyes and hair and temperament, although there continues to be a debate about how far nurture can alter nature. Others are external such as psychological and family influences or social, economic and environmental factors. Race and culture will be important in shaping children's views about the world in which they live. Good attachments to significant adults can be a protective factor throughout life. Traumatic events and experiences, such as illness, early separation from parents or carers, or abuse and neglect can lead to disruption or delay in a child's growth or development, or affect a child's well-being. Later experiences can either reduce or increase the effect of early damaging experiences.

We now know that children are capable of recovering from traumatic events, provided they are given the right circumstances<sup>2</sup>.

The *My World Triangle* examines key areas of the child's circumstances under the headings:

- How I grow and develop
- What I need from people who look after me
- My wider world.

These headings help practitioners to think about what is happening in a child's whole world. The three headings can be represented by three jigsaws which emphasise the interconnections between the different aspects of a child's development and well-being.

### **1. How I grow and develop**

The first diagram outlines factors in the child relating to various aspects of physical, cognitive, social and psychological development.

In order to understand and reach sound judgments about how well a child or young person is growing and developing, practitioners must think about many different aspects of their life including physical growth and health, their progress in learning new skills and their attainment in school, their emotional well-being, confidence and increasing independence, developing social skills and relationships with other people. Confidence in who they are will include a sense of identity that includes race and culture.

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<sup>2</sup> Two accessible textbooks which have been written to help practitioners from all agencies working with children understand how children develop in the context of their whole world are:

- Daniel, B. Wassell, S. and Gilligan, R. (1999) *Child Development for Child Care and Protection Workers*, London, Jessica Kingsley Publishing;
- Aldgate, J., Jones, D.P.H, Rose, W. and Jeffery, C. (2006), *The Developing World of The Child*, London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

## How I Grow and Develop

### Being Healthy

This includes full information about all aspects of a child's health and development, relevant to their age and stage. Developmental milestones, major illnesses, hospital admissions, any impairments, disabilities, conditions affecting development and health. Health care, including nutrition, exercise, physical and mental health issues, sexual health, substance abuse.

### Learning & Achieving

This includes cognitive development from birth, learning achievements and the skills and interests which can be nurtured. How additional needs are supported. Achievements in leisure, hobbies, sport. Education and social development milestones need to be recorded. Personal learning plans and other educational records should provide evidence of what has been achieved and what supports are needed or being provided for. Is the child's progress with formal education in line with expectations? Attention should also be given to further educational or training needs and potential employment opportunities for young people moving or who have moved towards semi- or full independence.

### Confidence in Who I am

Child's/young person's temperament and characteristics. Nature and quality of early and current attachments. Emotional and behavioural development. Resilience, self esteem. Ability to take pride in achievements. Confidence in managing challenges, opportunities, difficulties appropriate to the age and stage of development. Sense of identity which has an appreciation of ethnic and cultural background and is comfortable with gender, sexuality, religious belief. Skills in social presentation.

### Being able to Communicate

This includes development of language and communication. Being in touch and communicating constructively with others. Ability to express thoughts, feelings and needs. What is the child's/young person's preferred language or method of communication. Are there particular people with whom the child communicates that you will need to involve? Are aids to communication required?

### Learning to be Responsible

Learning appropriate social skills and behaviour. Values; sense of right and wrong. Consideration for others. Ability to understand what is expected and act on it. How does the child respond to key influences on social and emotional development at different ages and stages e.g. collaborative play in early childhood, peer expectations at school and outside.

### Becoming Independent, Looking After Myself

The gradual acquisition of skills and confidence needed to move from dependence to independence. Early practical skills of feeding, dressing etc. Engaging with learning and other tasks, acquiring skills and competence in social problem solving, getting on well with others, moving to independent living skills and autonomy. What are the effects of any impairment or disability or of social circumstances and how might these be compensated for?

### Enjoying Family & Friends

How is the child or young person responding to relationships that support, value, encourage and guide her or him; to family and wider social networks; opportunities to make and sustain lasting significant relationships; encouragement to develop skills in making friends, to take account of the feelings and needs of others and to behave responsibly. This links and overlaps with what a child or young person needs from those who look after them and the wider environment.

## **2. What I need from the people who look after me**

The second jigsaw accounts for the critical influences of other people in the child's life. Clearly parents and carers will have a significant role to play here but the role of siblings, wider family, teachers, friends and community group leaders and are also important. Faith and cultural environments will need to be recognised. Looking at the inputs from people surrounding the child can give clues to where there are strong supports and where those supports are weak.

It is important to build a picture of how well parents or carers are able to support a child's development, provide appropriate care and protection and well-being, so that the child thrives. Families' history, circumstances and current experience can have a big impact on whether parents and carers feel confident and able to look after their children well and encourage their progress and development.

## What I need from the People who Look After Me

### Everyday Care & Help

This is about the ability to nurture which includes day-to-day physical and emotional care, food, clothing and housing. Enabling healthcare and educational opportunities. Meeting the child's responsibility and independence. Encouraging growth of changing needs over time, encouraging growth of respond appropriately to a child's likes and dislikes. Support in meeting parenting tasks and help with carers' own needs.

### Keeping Me Safe

Keeping the child safe within the home and exercising appropriate guidance and protection outside. Practical care through home safety such as fire-guards and stair gates, hygiene. Protecting from physical, social and emotional dangers such as bullying, anxieties about friendships. Is the care-giver able to protect the child consistently and effectively? Seeking help with and solutions to domestic problems such as mental health needs, violence, offending behaviour. Taking a responsible interest in child's friends and associates, use of internet, exposure to situations where sexual exploitation or substance misuse may present risks, staying out late or staying away from home. Are there identifiable risk factors? Is the young person being encouraged to become knowledgeable about risks and confident about keeping safe?

### Being There for Me

Love, emotional warmth, attentiveness and engagement. Who are the people who can be relied on to recognise and respond to the child's/young person's emotional needs? Who are the people with whom the child has a particular bond? Are there issues of attachment? Who is of particular significance? Who does the child trust? Is there sufficient emotional security and responsiveness in the child's current caring environment? What is the level of stability and quality of relationships between siblings, other members of the household? Do issues between parents impact on their ability to parent? Are there issues within a family history that impinge on the family's ability to care?

### Play, Encouragement, Fun

Stimulation and encouragement to learn and to enjoy life, responsiveness to the child or young person's unique needs and abilities. Who spends time with the child/young person, communicating, providing an educational environment? Is the child's/young person's progress encouraged by sensitive responses to interests and achievements, involvement in school activities? Is there someone to act as the child's/young person's mentor and champion?

### Guidance, Supporting me to make the Right Choices

Values, guidance and boundaries. Making clear to the child/young person what is expected and why. Are household roles and rules of behaviour appropriate to the age and understanding of the child/young person? Are sanctions constructive and consistent? Are responses to behaviour appropriate, modelling behaviour that represents autonomous, responsible adult expectations. Is the child/young person treated with consideration and respect, encouraged to take social responsibility within a safe and protective environment? Are there any specific aspects which may need intervention?

### Knowing What is going to happen & When

Is the child's/young person's life stable and predictable? Are routines and expectations appropriate and helpful to age and stage of development? Are the child's/young person's needs given priority within an environment that expects mutual consideration. Who are the family members and others important to the child/young person? Is there stability and consistency within the household? Can the people who look after her or him be relied on to be open and honest about family and household relationships, about wider influences, needs, decisions and to involve the child/young person in matters which affect him or her. Transition issues must be fully explored for the child or young person during times of change.

### Understanding my Family's Background & Beliefs

Family and cultural history; issues of spirituality and faith. Do the child's /young person's significant carers foster an understanding of their own and the child's background – their family and extended family relationships and their origins. Is their racial, ethnic and cultural heritage given due prominence? Do those around the child/young person respect and value diversity? How well does the child understand the different relationships for example with step relationships, different partnerships etc.?

### **3. My wider world**

The communities where children grow up can have a significant impact on the well-being of both children and families. Communities can be supportive and protective or can add pressures and increase children and families' vulnerabilities. The level of support available from their wider family, social networks and within their neighbourhood can have a positive or negative effect. A child's wider world includes the environment where the family lives, the school children go to and other resources, as well as families' level of income. School can be a major source of support or stress. The wider world also includes the extent to which children and families feel included within their communities. Social exclusion can emanate from factors including racial and cultural discrimination. Jack and Gill have written about the importance of taking into account the child's wider world<sup>3</sup>. One of the protective factors likely to encourage resilience in children who are growing up in adversity is the continuing presence of a caring adult outside the child's family.

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<sup>3</sup> Jack, G. and Gill, O. (2003) *The Missing Side of the Triangle*, Barkingside, Barnardo's

## My Wider World

### School

From pre-school and nursery onwards, the school environment plays a key role. What are the experiences of school and peer networks and relationships? What aspects of the learning environment and opportunities for learning are important to the child/young person? Availability of study support, out of school learning and special interests. Can the school provide what is needed to meet the particular educational and social needs of the child?

### Support from Family, Friends & Other People

Networks of family and social support. Relationships with grandparents, aunts and uncles, extended family and friends. What supports can they provide? Are there tensions involved in or negative aspects of the family's social networks? Are there problems of lost contact or isolation? Are there reliable, long term networks of support which the child or family can reliably draw on. Who are the significant people in the child's/young person's wider environment?

### Enough Money

Has the family or young person adequate income to meet day to day needs and any special needs? Have problems of poverty and disadvantage affected opportunities? Is household income managed for the benefit of all? Are there problems of debts? Do benefit entitlements need to be explored? Is income adequate to ensure the child can take part in school and leisure activities and pursue special interests and skills?

### Comfortable & Safe Housing

Is the accommodation suitable for the needs of the child and family – including adaptations needed to meet special needs. Is it in a safe, well maintained and resourced and child friendly neighbourhood? Have there been frequent moves?

### Work Opportunities for My Family

Are there local opportunities for training and rewarding work? Cultural and family expectations of work and employment. Supports for the young person's career aspirations and opportunities.

### Belonging

Being accepted in the community, feeling included and valued. What are the opportunities for taking part in activities which support social contact and inclusion e.g. playgroups, after school clubs, youth clubs, environmental improvements, parents' and residents' groups, faith groups. Are there local prejudices and tensions affecting the child's or young person's ability to fit in?

### Local Resources

Resources which the child/young person and family can access for leisure, faith, sport, active lifestyle. Projects offering support and guidance at times of stress or transition. Access to and local information about health, childcare, care in the community, specialist services.

## Understanding the meaning of the dimensions

While gathering information, there are some critical questions to bear in mind:

- What kind of child or young person is this? What are their strengths, talents and vulnerabilities?
- What aspects of parenting behaviours promote the child's development and well-being?
- What aspects of parenting may not be helpful?
- What other factors are influencing the child's well-being and development?
- What other factors are influencing the parent's ability to provide the care needed to help children to meet all the eight *Well-being Indicators*?
- What strengths and pressures are present in every part of the child's world?

Wider factors may be diverse and include the impact of low income, poor housing, breakdown in family relationships and social isolation or the impact of parental drug or alcohol misuse, mental illness or high levels of neighbourhood vandalism and crime. The information under any section of any of the three headings may indicate reasons why the child or young person is experiencing difficulties or finding any impairment they have more disabling than it needs to be. The information may also point to strengths or helpful factors and inputs which promote their welfare and resilience.

As young people make the transition to adulthood, their needs will change and there will be more emphasis on the supports that can be provided outwith families and within communities. *Getting it right for every child* recognises that it is just as important to support these young people as it is to help younger children. Their needs should be seen in terms of what they require, what can be offered and who can support them. Young people themselves should lead these discussions and be fully involved in any decisions made to help them.

## Using the information to assess a child's needs

Health and education will routinely gather some of the information under the *My World Triangle* headings as part of their everyday work with children and families.

When assessing children who may need additional help, practitioners should use the headings in the three areas of the *My World Triangle* to help them think about the following questions:

- **What information have I got?**
- **Is this enough to assess the child's needs?**
- **From where might that information be gathered?**

The information gathered should be proportionate to the problems. Every practitioner working with a child should not feel they have to complete information in detail around the whole triangle. What is important is that they bear in mind that what is happening in one area may have a significant impact on another area.

There may be overlap between the different dimensions. Some health issues, for example, will have an impact on a child's achievement at school. In these cases, practitioners should opt for whichever domain seems relevant from their perspective, using more than one domain for information if issues are interconnected. The important thing is that strengths and pressures are recorded. It is less important where they are recorded.

Where a *Lead Professional* is in place, it is his or her job to make sure that each member of the multi-disciplinary team brings different knowledge that can be shared to build up a total picture and to make sense of that information and its impact on the child.

### **Creating a chronology of significant events**

The *Lead Professional* will also have an important role in ensuring that significant events in a child's life that may be held by different agencies are brought together.

This will include a record of:

- Agencies' activities
- Child's health history
- Education, training and employment history of child and family
- Changes in the child's legal status
- Placement history for looked after children
- History of any offences
- Significant events and changes in the child's /young person's family and wider social networks.

Children and families should be involved in the compilation of this chronology because they will be able to identify what is special to them about these events.

### **How to gather the information round the *My World Triangle***

Having the chronology in mind, practitioners will be able to link events to the different domains of the *My World Triangle*.

For example, changing home addresses regularly may help to explain why a child is not doing well at school. Where there are concerns about a baby's health and well-being, the fact that several clinic appointments have been missed may indicate problems with parental care. Or it may not, and the assessment may provide a different account of why appointments have been missed. In either case, the linking of chronology events to the domains of the *My World Triangle* is an important part of the assessment process.

To structure the information the *My World Triangle* can provide, it may helpful to use an aide-memoire. Many local authorities have developed these to help with integrated assessments. The *My World Triangle* has emerged from the Integrated

Assessment Framework approach, first launched in 2005. The original framework now forms the central part of the *National Practice Model* but needs to be combined with the use of the well-being indicators and the analysis of information gathered using the *Resilience Matrix*.

To help make sense of the information, practitioners should do the following:

- divide the information into strengths and pressures
- take account of children's age and vulnerability record events or circumstances that might affect the child's future well-being, both positive and negative.

Every child has good and bad things in their lives. What counts is the balance between the strengths and pressures, what can be built upon and what can be changed. When pressures are identified on all three sides of the triangle it is likely that a child will have needs of a serious and complex nature.

Practitioners should take account of factors that may enhance a family's capacity to cope with stresses or problems, such as the availability of extended family support, good relationships with friends or neighbours or factors promoting personal resilience. When adult services are working with an individual, they should consider how their help can impact upon children in the family.

Children's age and stage of development should have a bearing on the assessment, planning and action. Very young children, for example cannot wait for lengthy decisions to be made about where they are to live because this will have an impact on their attachment to significant adults. It would be very wrong to disrupt a child's schooling, say, just before standard grade exams or at other critical points in their educational careers.

### **Including specialist assessment material alongside the *My World Triangle***

To supplement or explore in more depth specific areas of the triangle, practitioners may wish to make use of specialist reports, for example, from a paediatrician, other health care professionals, educational psychologists or a specialist in a child's

specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia. These can be added to the information gathered from round the *My World Triangle*. Usually, the *Lead Professional* will incorporate this information into any analysis in the process of constructing a *Child's Plan*.

There are also available to practitioners a wide range of scales and questionnaires, used to assess specific aspects of a child's behaviour or demeanour and tools to help assess parenting in depth<sup>4</sup>. There are also tools to help assess risk of harm and management of risk<sup>5</sup>. The findings from these can also be added into the analysis of relevant information gathered.

*Getting it right for every child* team

The Scottish Government

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<sup>4</sup> See Department of Health, Cox and Bentovim (2000), *The Family Pack of Questionnaires and Scales*, London, The Stationery Office.

<sup>5</sup> See Aldgate, J. and Rose, W. (2007) *A systematic practice model for assessing and managing risk where children need to be protected from harm*, [www.scottishgovernment.girfec](http://www.scottishgovernment.girfec).