

Abstract of Research into Resilience of Children Looked After

Background: The concept of resilience has been used to explore risk and positive adaptation amongst groups of people experiencing adversity in an attempt to identify protective factors that enable them to succeed despite the odds. This study asked young people with experience of LAC for their views of what helped and hindered them and applied a resilience framework to interpret the findings.

Aims: To establish to what extent young people with experience of LAC would demonstrate risk and positive adaptation factors highlighted in previous research. To establish specific actions or events that young people found helpful/unhelpful particularly in relation to the services they received from the local authority. To identify resilience amongst participants and establish whether their responses were significantly different from less resilient participants. To explore patterns of resilience.

Sample: Fifteen young people aged 12 – 18 with experience of LAC.

Method: Semi-structured interviews were conducted using a time line as a process for engaging young people and rating scales on key factors identified from previous research. Frequency charts were used to demonstrate evidence of risk and positive adaptation and to record the views of what young people found helpful/unhelpful. Differences in responses between resilient and less resilient young people were analysed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov two-sample test (KS test) of differences in distributions. A time chart was used to explore patterns of resilience.

Results: The participants' demonstrated risk and positive adaptation in many areas identified in previous research. They identified specific actions or events that were helpful or unhelpful in the services they received from the local authority.

Conclusion: Resilience can be identified in young people with experience of LAC using a risk and protective factors framework. Differences in resilience appear to be related to the accumulation and number of risk and protective factors rather than any one single factor. An increase in protective factors and decrease in risk appears to be strongly linked to significant life events which can provide turning points for young peoples' development. There was also evidence of resilience as a developmental progression.