

## **Child's Developmental Needs**

Assessment of what is happening to a child, requires that each aspect of the child's developmental progress is examined in the context of that child's stage of development. Account must be taken of any particular vulnerabilities, such as learning disability or any physically impairing condition. Consideration should also be given to any socially and environmentally disabling factors which have an impact on the child's development, such as limited access to others who share the same disability, ethnicity or gender or other forms of discrimination. There must be a clear understanding of what a particular child is capable of achieving successfully at each stage of development in order to ensure that he or she has the opportunity to achieve his or her full potential.

Good outcomes for children can sometimes be blocked by assumptions people make which tends to stereotype particular families.

### **Health**

*Includes* growth and development as well as physical and mental wellbeing. The impact of genetic factors and of any impairment should be considered. Involves receiving appropriate health care when ill, and adequate and nutritious diet, exercise, immunisations where appropriate and developmental checks, dental and optical care and, for older children, appropriate advice and information on issues that have an impact on health, including sex education and substance misuse.

The assessment should take account of the extent to which the physical health of the child may be affected by other social conditions including the impact of poverty and or worklessness in the household, the access to appropriate advice and support services and whether past life experiences or trauma has had an effect on their physical health.

### **Education**

Covers all areas of child's cognitive development, which begins from birth.

*Includes* opportunities: for play and interaction with other children; to have access to books; to acquire a range of skills and interests; to experience success and achievement. Involves an adult interested in educational activities, progress and achievements, who takes account of the child's starting point and any special educational needs.

Assessment should take into account whether the child has had the opportunity to realise their potential without the limitations imposed upon them by negative stereotyping. Stereotyping may also affect the relationship with parents and how they are involved and consulted in their child's education.

## **Emotional and Behavioural Development**

Concerns the appropriateness of response demonstrated in feelings and actions by a child, initially to parents or caregivers, and as the child grows older, to others beyond the family.

*Includes* nature and quality of early attachments, characteristics of temperament, adaptation to change, response to stress and degree of appropriate self-control.

There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that black pupils in England underachieve educationally and are more likely to be excluded from school and their white counterparts. (Kundnani, 1998).

## **Identity**

Concerns the child's growing sense of self as a separate and valued person.

*Includes* the child's view of self and abilities, self-image and self-esteem, and having a positive sense of individuality. Race, religion, age, gender, sexuality and disability may all contribute to this. Feelings of belonging and acceptance by family, peer group, and wider society, including other cultural groups.

Identity is most often spoken about in relation to black children. In fact many children about whom there are professional concerns have problems with their identity, self-esteem and self-worth. These issues have been shown to be particularly significant in many children in the care system. (Sinclair and Gibbs, 1998).

Assessment should consider the child's awareness of their own ethnicity, their access to a lived experience of their culture and their religious and spiritual needs.

## **Family and Social Relationships**

Development of empathy and the capacity to place self in someone else's shoes.

*Includes* a stable and affectionate relationship with parents and caregivers, good relationships with siblings, increasing importance of age appropriate friendships with peers and other significant persons in the child's life and response of family to these relationships.

Practitioners often raise questions about the emphasis in the popular culture of all societies on the central importance of the Eurocentric models of child development, loving and protective relationships as represented in stories folklore poetry and music. Secure attachments require reciprocal relationships with a high degree of communication, matched responsiveness and consistency.

The assessment should take account of the specific family structure in which the child lives and the patterns of attachment which operate including attachment figures who may not be blood relatives. Aspects of migration, separation and trauma experienced by the child and wider family network will also be significant.

**Social Presentation**

Concerns child's growing understanding of the way in which appearance, behaviour, and any impairment are perceived by the outside world and the impression being created.

*Includes* appropriateness of dress for age, gender, culture and religion; cleanliness and personal hygiene; and availability advice from parents or caregivers about presentation in different settings.

**Self Care Skills**

Concerns the acquisition by a child of practical, emotional and communication competencies required for increasing independence. Includes early practical skills of dressing and feeding, opportunities to gain confidence and practical skills to undertake activities away from the family and independent living skills as older children.

*Includes* encouragement to acquire social problem solving approaches. Special attention should be given to the impact of a child's impairment and other vulnerabilities, and on social circumstances affecting these in the development of self care skills.