Excalibur: Multi-Agency Intervention and Support Barometer

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Abstract

Over the past decade, heavy criticism has been directed towards mental health and social care services for failing to manage children and families at risk more effectively. Unfortunately, traditional risk assessment tools have proved to generally be of limited usefulness, especially as they struggle to address multiple risks within a single measure and fail to facilitate effective communication between different professionals and agencies.

However, adverse incidents, including at school, can be reduced in frequency by sensible contingency planning and risk assessment. However, this needs to be seen as the assessment of current or past situations, and not as a predictor of particular future events. Risk management should also be conducted in a spirit of collaboration with pupils and their parents, building on their strengths and emphasising improvement. In contrast, defensive risk management has a poor user experience and poor user engagement, serving only to increase risk.

Recognising these problems, the Multi-Agency Intervention and Support Barometer has been designed to provide a unique but comprehensive approach to risk management. It utilizes a very broad-based approach, in a user-friendly format, with major emphasis on intervention rather than on risk identification alone. The barometer also provides effective communication across teams, services and agencies. In addition, the barometer allows for easy updating and tracking of changes over time, and emergency alerts are automatically triggered when pupils score very highly on the risk factors being measured.

If integrated into education, health and social care, the barometer will actively reduce risk whilst also providing essential support for vulnerable children and families. The aim of this presentation is therefore to highlight the underlying rationale behind the approach, and to provide detailed guidance as to how it can be implemented in effective and cost effective ways across a whole range of community settings.