

Exercise

Read the vignette and information provided about Liam and focus on the family and environmental factors.

Within your group compile a chronology from Liam's perspective in relation to the family and environmental dimensions. Use the active voice, in other words use 'I' to help present Liam's views, wishes, feeling and experiences as he has grown and developed as if it were his own voice. These statements should be like direct quotations from the child or young person.

Then bring your accounts to the larger group for wider discussion and exploration of ways in which you can take the learning back to your practice setting. Consider the implications of focusing on wider family and environmental factors.

Vignette – Liam Evans

Liam – Liam was a healthy baby when he was born and met his developmental milestones without difficulty. When Liam was 26 months his mother reported that he had become difficult to handle; he was reported to be sleeping poorly and exhausting Mrs Evans with his defiance and hyperactivity. Mrs Evans was supported by her new partner Steve and Liam's sleeping and behaviour gradually improved. Liam was reported by nursery staff to be a bright and happy little boy who was always happy to see Steve when he dropped him off or picked him up from nursery.

Liam's presentation deteriorated again around the age of five. His mother reported that Liam had begun to wet himself again. Staff at Liam's primary school reported that Liam was very unhappy when he first came to school and could not be consoled. Again, with support from Steve, Liam began to settle at school.

Liam was very pleased when his sister, Shirene, was born followed by the birth of his brother, Lewis, two years later. Although he could be very jealous, Liam has a good relationship with both siblings.

Liam did not want to go to the local Secondary school and began to truant soon after he moved up. Liam began to spend less time with his family and has, over the last three years, gradually become more involved in local gang fighting.

Continued ➤

further

The child's perspective

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Parents - when Liam was born his mother suffered from undiagnosed post-natal depression. Liam's father (Ricky Newstead) provided a level of consistency and did most of the caring when Liam was very young.

Mr Newstead left the family home shortly before Liam's second birthday. Mr Newstead returned to his home town in another part of the country when allegations arose that he had been in a sexual relationship with a neighbour's 15 year old daughter.

Mr Newstead has not maintained contact with Liam or Fiona, and has been in a long-term relationship for last 5 years. He has two other sons, aged 2 and 4.

Steve has been married to Fiona for 12 years and has known her since they went to school together. Steve trained as a cook but has struggled to find regular employment. Following an assault, Steve has become more and more affected by depression. Steve works part-time at a local pizza restaurant but has recently been given formal warning over his late arrival for work.

Fiona has always maintained that Liam has something wrong with him. Fiona feels that Liam takes after his father and she has become increasingly unwilling to have Liam in the house due to his aggression and drinking.

Environment – Liam's family lived in a two-bedroomed ground-floor flat when he was born. Liam shared a bedroom with Shirene for 2 years until they moved to their current house. Liam then shared a room with his brother Lewis.

Liam attended a local nursery and primary school and was able to walk there and back with his step-father. Liam's secondary school was further away and required Liam to get a school bus. Because of a split in catchment areas, Liam did not know many children at his new school. Liam became the target for bullying and he began to truant.

Liam stayed away from home during the day and avoided the local shops where Steve's work was based. Instead, he began to hang out with a group of boys at a shopping centre in town.

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The child's perspective

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