

Brearley (1982)

Brearley's 1982 definition, which has been influential in social work, framed risk itself in negative terms: 'the relative variation in possible loss outcomes'.

However, it was part of a wider model, comprising various elements, including strengths, which were factors likely to reduce dangerous outcomes.

Brearley distinguished between vulnerability, which he described as 'capable of being wounded or susceptible to danger', and 'danger' which he denoted as 'a feared outcome of a hazard which is either expected to be a loss or is associated with a loss in the exception of the observer'.

Carson (1995)

- Argues that social work has focused on risk assessment at the expense of risk management.
- Tanner (1995) explores this further by implying that risk management serves to utilise a social worker's managerial skills rather than professional skills.
- Too much of a focus on 'task and process' following too rigid procedures.
- View to manage rather than treat social problems leads to a whole range of dilemmas.

Risk in relation to social work:

When working with:

- Older people or those with learning difficulties --> social workers equate risk with vulnerability.

-Offenders and users of mental health services --> risk is associated with the idea of dangerousness.

However Link and Cullen (1986) suggest an inverse relationship between contact with people with mental health problems and their perceived dangerousness.

-Children and child services --> risk is related to significant harm to the child.