

Children, Young People and Families

Supporting paper

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Module code: (BMHP5004_LON)

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Introduction

This report is assessing the topic of vulnerability and family facing adversity.

In the context of children facing family adversity, vulnerability is defined as the “the condition of needing supportive or protective social services and community resources because of age, poverty, disability, etc.” (Dictionary, 2022).

It can be distinguished that there are different processes that lead to resilience such as protective processes which are beneficial for the family members exposed, but not beneficial for the others and compensatory processes where the resilience has equal effect. The factors that confer resilience to the children who are exposed to family adversity can include parental attachment and bonding, peer factors and external affiliations (Ferguson, Horwood, 2003).

Description of the family

The selected case to be analysed in this report is the Leeds case study, The project: Signpost.

In this family there are five children who were raised by their mother. It has been assessed that the single mother had problems with alcohol and substance misuse and further that, mental health problems.

Four of the children have the same father and the youngest has a different father, but both of them have no great input to the family. Further that the mother has accused both men of domestic violence. All the children are boys and their age is 15, 13, 11, 9 and 6 years old.

The main concerns for the family was juvenile offending and antisocial behaviour. Also the children had very poor school attendance. Therefore the children were in a position of vulnerability because of the mothers substance misuse, lack of fathers figure in the family ensemble and potentially being part of domestic violence towards their mother.

An average family will benefit of the equilibrium of parents being involved in raising the children and creating a safe environment for them. Factors such as alcohol and substance misuse, domestic violence are impacting negatively the children.

The child development depends on the dynamic of the family structure and families facing adversity can create adaptive difficulties for the children that result in behavioural problems such as antisocial behaviour presented in the case study above. The family has a major influence in the outcome of the children behaviour (Martineli et al, 2018).

In order to address behavioural problems it is important to assess each context such as family, school. The information on the children from the case study had emphasised that children were struggling with attending school due to the family problems, were presenting an antisocial behavior and offending.

Parental substance misuse and the impact of parental substance on children

Substance misuse is defined as the “patterned use of a drug in which the user consumes the substance in amounts or with methods which are harmful to themselves or others, and is a form of substance related disorder” (NHS, 2022).

Studies have identified that for the children who have alcoholics parents there is a high risk for alcoholism in adult life also. It can also lead to behavioural and cognitive deficit for the children. It can be considered that there is an elevated risk for negative mood, low attention span, hyperactivity, impulsivity, or behavioural undercontrol (Zuckett et al, 2003).

In this case study, the single mother was the main carer for the children and had an alcohol and drug addiction, this is why the alcoholism is even more likely an outcome for the adulthood. Also alcohol and drug addiction inevitably leads to mental health problems and the parents mental health problems are impacting factors in the children development.

Parental mental health problems

Luthar (2003) considers that mental illness is “a family matter”. That is because when one of the family members, especially in this case the mother has mental health problems it impacts in different ways the life of the others and it compromises the family functioning. The risks for the children with a parent with mental health problems can affect the children social adjustment, can lead to difficulties in school and even develop delinquent behaviour.

The social and emotional domain of functioning for the children who have parent with mental illness because of the lack of supportive interaction. Resilience in infants and young children is not fully formed and developing trust can be more lengthy. Overcoming adversity can be more difficult in young children as they do not have the required maturity and resources.

The Leeds case study presents a divided family that is impacted by different factors such as alcohol and drugs, domestic violence, mother’s mental health problems and separation of the parents.

The relevant agencies had struggle to work with the family because of the lack of interest from the parents. One of the actions was more practical and the family was helped with general cleaning of their home in order to create a better environment for the family and motivate them towards that.

It was intended a closer collaboration with the fathers, the children being able to live with the father instead of being in care. The mother was helped with her addictions and was enrolled to the Leeds Addiction Unit. Another action was related to school attendance and children behaviour at school, where the agency collaborated with the schools to manage the impact of the factors of vulnerability.

There were registered positive results with the children living with their fathers, which are continuously helped with housing, parenting advice and guidance. The children are attending school and have a better behaviour at school and there are no concerns of antisocial behaviour and juvenile offending.

Coping with divorce and separation

In the modern society marriage is more optional and the number of single mothers has increased. The children are exposed to various family transitions that causes stress and can create great difficulties for the coping system of the children. This changes can affect the development of the children in various ways, psychological, social, behavioural, academic. It has been observed that majority of children who are exposed to divorce and separation will experience emotional distress and changes in their behaviour, such as anger, noncompliance etc. Some children internalise the problems which leads to even more problems such as low self esteem, anxiety, depression (Hetherington, Elmore, 2003).

The policy and legislation related to the case

There is different legislation that applies to the selected case study such as: The children act 2004, The children act 1989, The Equality Act 2010, the policies related to the Children Safeguarding 2018 (Gov, 2004).

Conclusion and recommendations

This report has identified that for the selected case study the adversity factors were in connection to parental alcoholism and substance abuse, parental problems with mental health and family separation.

It is recommend that the children will continue to attend school and that the fathers will take full responsibility for raising the children taking in considerations the mothers addiction and mental health.

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CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

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INTRODUCTION: TOPIC OF VULNERABILITY AND FAMILY FACING ADVERSITY

- Vulnerability is defined as the “the condition of needing supportive or protective social services and community resources because of age, poverty, disability, etc.” (Dictionary, 2022).
- Protective processes
- Compensatory process



DESCRIPTION OF THE FAMILY LEEDS

- single mother with 5 children, youngest child is 6 and oldest is 15 years old
- the children have 2 different fathers, but do not have an active role in raising the children
- mother has alcohol and drug addiction and mental health problems
- children are not attending school regularly, have an antisocial behavior and offending
- family is failing to collaborate with agencies



PARENTAL SUBSTANCE MISUSE

- Substance misuse is defined as the "patterned use of a drug in which the user consumes the substance in amounts or with methods which are harmful to themselves or others, and is a form of substance related disorder" (NHS, 2022).



IMPACT OF PARENTAL SUBSTANCE ABUSE ON CHILDREN

- *high risk for alcoholism in adult life*
- *behavioural and cognitive deficit for the children*
- *negative mood, low attention span, hyperactivity, impulsivity, or behavioural undercontrol (Zuckert et al, 2003).*



PARENTAL MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

- mental health problems are "a family matter" Luthar (2003).
- the family health of one member of the family impacts the every day life and compromises the family functioning



COPING WITH DIVORCE AND SEPARATION

- Increased number of single mothers
- exposure to family transition due to parents separation
- impact on the children development, emotional distress, anger, noncompliance
- internalisation of the problems: low self esteem, anxiety, depression (Hetherington, Elmore, 2003).



AGENCIES INTERVENTION TO HELP THE FAMILY

- *Helping with general cleaning of their home*
- *Closer collaboration with the fathers, the children being able to live with the father instead of being in care.*
- *The mother was helped with her addictions and through the Leeds Addiction Unit.*
- *Improving school attendance and children behaviour at school*
- *Collaborating with the schools to manage the impact of the factors of vulnerability.*

THE POLICY AND LEGISLATION RELATED TO THE CASE

- *The children act 2004,*
- *The children act 1989,*
- *The Equality Act 2010,*
- *The policies related to the Children Safeguarding 2018 (Gov, 2004).*



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Children to continue to attend school
- Fathers to take full responsibility for raising the children taking in considerations the mothers addiction and mental health.



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