

**Children, Young People and Families
(BMHP5004_LON)**

Assessment Component 1

Case study - Written Report

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Table of Contents

Introduction:.....	3
Presentation of case study	3
Case Study	5
Analysis	6
Evaluation	8
References	9

Introduction:

This report focuses on analysing various adversities faced by the Bradford family and the outcomes of the interventions provided by the local authority. The issues are drawn from the provided case study, which has elements of substance abuse, neglect, antisocial behaviour, and prostitution. The risks assessed in this report and their impact on the family are followed by an analysis of the intervention process, current policy and roles of services and an evaluation of the case details based on own perspective and research.

Presentation of Case Study

The case study that this report evaluates is the Bradford case. In this case study, the family comprises mum Julie, a single mother of four boys: Tom, Ricky, Leo and Charley. And two girls: Kia and Donna. Aunt Sonia is the children's aunt and a key family member.

Julie is often away from the family home and has a history of criminal behaviour, and she is also suspected of practising prostitution to fund a heroin habit. Aunt Sonia is the primary caregiver to the children. Tom, the eldest, has criminal behavioural issues and has been involved with the offending youth team. All the children are absent from school regularly, with the three boys being permanently excluded and expected to attend an alternative provision.

Charley, the youngest child, is only marked present at nursery 3 per cent of the time and is yet to acquire several immunisations.

There are general concerns of child neglect in this case.

The family residence is at an estate marked for demolition, but housing providers struggle to rehome the family due to their antisocial criminal behaviour. Criminal records include theft, shoplifting, disorderly conduct, begging, criminal damage, and substance abuse.

Moreover, there are also problems within their community. They have taken matters into their own hands to try and force them out of the area by smashing windows in the property.

The factors presented in this case study point to a high risk of vulnerability for the children involved. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "vulnerability" as "the quality or state of being exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally" (Clark and Preto, 2018).

Applied to the subjects analysed in this report, it means the level of risk that a family or individual faces to lose their life, assets and properties, and livelihood system in the event of adversity. This level also corresponds to the degree of difficulty in recovering after these possible events (Pérez Armiño, 2005).

A risk factor is an aspect of the lifestyle or personal behaviour, an environmental situation or characteristic associated with an increase in the probability of the occurrence of antisocial behaviours above the primary indices of the population (Loeber, 1990). The fact that an individual presents risk factors does not imply that he will necessarily develop problematic behaviours. It means that if we compare him with an individual without these factors, he will have a greater probability of becoming involved in these behaviours (De la Peña, 2010).

Assessing risk involves "predicting the chances of a certain negative event occurring in the future" based on "known information about the history and current state of a specific person or situation". In the field of child protection, risk assessment is a process aimed at determining the probability that a parental figure will commit an act of abuse or neglect towards a child in the future, and that said act will cause harm to the child; since the child at social risk is exposed to a contingency or proximity of damage or liability related to the society that they integrate (Latorre, 2006; De la Peña, 2010) and therefore, prevention is essential. There are situations of varying levels of risk for children that can become helpless, in which the parents and, therefore, the minors live in personal and relational circumstances that make it difficult or impossible for them to carry out their work as parents and mothers adequately, so that intervention in these circumstances can optimise attention to the child's needs without adopting more drastic measures (Álvarez-Dardet et al., 2010).

Families at risk often present some characteristic sociodemographic traits (Pons-Salvador, Cerezo & Bernabé, 2005). In most of these cases, they are families with many members, with an average of 3 to 4 children, and in 30 or 40% of the cases, they are single-parent families, in charge of single women (Rodríguez et al., 2006). These families also present economic precariousness that makes them constantly depend on social assistance (Arruabarrena and De Paúl, 2002; González Ortiz, 2011). This situation usually has its origin in job instability, in the terrible conditions of the job (Arruabarrena and De Paúl, 2002; Moreno, 2002) and the unemployment of those responsible for these families (Rodrigo et al. 2006). Another source of precariousness would be education since these families depend on adults with a low level of education (Arruabarrena and De Paúl, 2002). Studies indicate how the combination of these indicators is associated with an increase in the level of risk and the persistence or chronicity of these situations (Pons-Salvador, Cerezo and Bernabé, 2001).

Another characteristic of families at risk is that they suffer an accumulation of stressful and problematic circumstances such as experiences of abuse in childhood and adulthood, drug and alcohol abuse, health problems, emotional disorders, and antisocial behaviour (Arruabarrena and De Paúl, 2002; Moreno, 2002). These patterns are often cyclical, and they repeat themselves through generations.

Case Study:

This family's patterns are detrimental and will significantly impact every member for many years to come. In recent years, the term family has been conceptualised from various perspectives. However, as mentioned (Pillcorema, 2013), the family is a group of individuals united by blood ties, marriage and adoption that live together. However, this definition is being complemented because the family is not limited simply to a blood or lineage tie but to a group of individuals linked by affective ties who share the same home. At the same time, Ruales (2013) points out that the family is "the most primary nucleus of the human being, where men and women register their first feelings, experiences, and incorporate main patterns of socially accepted behaviour." In this way, it is understood that the family gives way to the development of the subject due to its influence on the psychological, intellectual, social, and physical development of the human being.

For his part, Riofrio (2013) agrees that the family is a determining factor in the development of both the personality and the social aspect because the family imparts a great variety of affections, values and teaches what the right way to behave in different situations that occur to the subject throughout his life is. In other words, the environment in which the individual is born and grows determines characteristics that impact his personal development and identity. Therefore, the family group must fulfil essential biological, economic, cultural, and spiritual functions for human development. Likewise, satisfy emotional, trust, security, support needs and teach the subject from an early age a system of ideas, beliefs, norms, and values that would allow their insertion in the social environment. From birth to the first years of life, children depend on their parents to carry out simple tasks that increasingly become more complex, including the relationship with the environment surrounding them. Parents and caregivers have relevant functions at this stage and a fundamental role in the child's optimal development for an excellent social adaptation to the environment in which it develops (Luján-García et al., 2013).

Children who grow up in a home where parental drug use is constant generally experience various developmental delays. Often many of them become victims of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse who do not ask for help due to fear, ignorance, or simply because they do not know how to. In addition, the traumatic effects of this type of abuse can be devastating throughout life, forming adults with problems relating to others, with depressive or aggressive behaviours and who are likely to repeat behaviour patterns with their children (Revista InDependientes, 2018).

This neglect has long-lasting effects on children and can even have physiological side effects and adverse health effects. Most of them present emotional and behavioural problems at school, such as outbursts of anger, depression, anxiety, or detachment. It is also common for them to show delays in speech, malnutrition, and problems with cognitive functioning (NSPCC, 2018).

Life in the addict's family is chaotic. The addict's mood or behaviour will be unpredictable at any given time. The trust and intimacy that may have existed between them in the past are cracking. For this reason, it is not uncommon for children to become adults who perceive relationships as stressful and destructive, with problems experiencing intimacy with other people (Supporting the Supporters: families of drug misusers, 2021).

According to The UK Drug Policy Commission (2021), 1.5 million adults are affected by a relative's drug use. The figures are a minimum estimate due to the subject being somewhat of a hidden issue due to the stigmatisation present in society regarding this subject. Nevertheless, they show the significant impact of this issue in the community (Supporting the Supporters: families of drug misusers, 2021).

Research on the subject shows that children of substance abuse parents are twice as likely to become abusers themselves compared to their peers. Moreover, they are also at risk of suffering a wide range of poor outcomes such as social, emotional, and behavioural adjustment issues and cognitive delays (Solis et al., 2012).

Analysis:

The family became the subject of assessment as soon as the local authorities were aware of the children's potential situation of neglect due to the lack of school attendance and the criminal record of Julie and her eldest son Tom. They had also reportedly been known to several services for many years.

According to the Children Act 1989, the authorities must ensure the needs and safety of every child must be prioritised, and that every effort must be made by the authorities to ensure the child is safe and preserve the family unit unless at risk of significant harm (Children and Young Persons Act 2008, 2008).

Individual and universal services may act when a child's needs are relatively low; however, where more complex needs are present, swifter action may be provided under section 17 of the Children act 1989 (children in need). In the eventuality of severe child protection concerns, the local authority may decide on the steps of action under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 (Waterhouse and McGhee, 2015).

Children can be at risk of neglect, abuse, or harm within the family or their environment. In this case, due to the nature of Julie's issues, they are likely into regular contact with several unsavoury characters that frequent the family home. Moreover, as the case documented, they lack the support of their neighbours. This situation puts the children at risk of very significant, direct harm.

Every practitioner must follow the principles of the Children's Acts 1989 and 2004. In addition, the Equality Act 2010 states that public authorities have a responsibility to promote and encourage equality of opportunity. This applies to the assessment process and the provision of services and interventions, ensuring that every individual has the same quality of access and benefits (HM Government, 2018).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international agreement to protect children's rights and provides a framework for providing services to children. Every practitioner that encounters children is responsible for their safety. Several practitioners have a role to play for a family to receive the right help and support. Every agency and individual must follow statutory guidance to collaborate effectively (HM Government, 2018).

Julie and Aunt Sonia were mistrustful of agency involvement and worried that intervention would lead to the removal of the children.

There was severe consideration of the removal of the younger children initially. Still, they settled with the family that this would be deferred on the condition that they engaged with a key worker and worked conjunctively to improve the situation.

The offer of a new house tenancy was subjected to the family's engagement with services. They were given a short-term tenancy, and compliance with the intervention plan was written into the tenancy requirements. The family settled well into their new environment, and everyone started to take pride in the home.

Julie entered a drug support project and completed an introductory literacy course. Her criminal behaviour stopped, and the number of unsuitable visitors to her home decreased as a result.

Sonia worked with the Family Links Nurturing Programme to improve parenting and relationship skills, while the caseworker also assisted her with budgeting, debt advice and implementing routines for the children.

The children's school attendance improved to over 90 per cent and the brother's antisocial behaviour decreased due to eldest brother Tom's departure.

The caseworker worked with the family and collaborated with other agencies for a year, gradually decreasing the level of intensive intervention leaving the housing association to lead the monitoring of the family. The tenancy was subsequently made permanent, providing security and stability to the family.

Evaluation:

In this case, early prevention and the provision of early help would have been more effective than reacting later in ensuring the children's welfare, especially for the youngest children. Research points out that exposure to stressful situations such as the case presented early can severely hinder cognitive development (Rees, 2012).

Early help also means that providing support as soon as a situation arises will prevent further issues from developing. This kind of support relies upon the effective collaboration of the agencies and organisations involved. Local authorities are responsible for promoting inter-agency collaboration under section 10 of the Children Act 2004 (HM Government, 2018).

According to Berridge (2007), children in care present a range of poor outcomes that includes poor mental health, academic adversity, and social wellbeing. These children show high levels of resilience. However, they are also at risk of severe cognitive and developmental delays and emotional impairment. The probabilities of these outcomes are higher the longer the children are exposed to adversity and unsuitable environments that don't encourage emotional support and nurturing.

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