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Assessment Component 1

Case study - Written Report

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Troubled Families: Portsmouth (Case study).

The family of a single other with three children. The mother had frequent mental health problems and it was affecting her in managing daily tasks. She was in debt among which was an eviction notice for rent arrears. Due to the mental health, she lost her zeal to work and the conditions at her home were terrible, for instance there was no working cooker and this meant that having a meal at home was very hard. Her children were not attending school because their mother' had anxiety to be separated from them. The youngest child had not started nursery school yet she was of age. The eldest daughter often cared for her siblings. The mother's mental difficulties affected her capacity to provide for her children's needs thus rendering them vulnerable.

Risk factors vulnerability in the case

According to Section 47 of Children Act 1989, children in this family are in need and vulnerable because they are likely to suffer given the fact that; they lack education and are living under poor housing conditions in addition to having a mentally ill mother. The mother's anxiety affects the ability of children to attend school including the youngest one who was supposed to be nursery school. Lack of education exposes the children to the risks of vulnerability like welfare dependency, exposures to high levels of crime and low self-esteem. (Hayden and Parr, 2019; Children Act, 2004). Studies by Cerio (2019) also noted that education inequality exposes the children to worse health conditions, drug abuse, illegal activities, lack of voice in the society due to social isolation, and exploitation like child labour.

The case showed that the mother has mental problems. This exposes a risk of vulnerability to the children because it may lead to injury on the children. This is because a mother who is mentally ill increases the risks of a mother being hostile to the children and sometime physical abuses like severe beating of the children in case the mother feels annoyed and frustrated. (Smith, 2015). Therefore, mother's health situation increases on the risks of children being needy as noted in Section 17 of Children Act 1989.

The children are also exposed to the risk of losing their mother hence becoming homeless due to the mother's mental issues. The mother's ability to become a parent can be terminated hence making children vulnerable. (Smith, 2015). The eviction notice also exposes the children to a risk of being homeless in case the mother is evicted due to inability to pay her rent arrears.

The poor conditions at home indicate elements of poverty in this family which exposes the children to risks of poor health, poor sanitations, lack of balanced diet, increases mother's stress, short life expectancy among others. (Cerio, 2019). Poverty also exposes these children to environmental toxins and other hazards like gang violence, drugs, crime and violence by participating or simply witnessing it. (Alkire and Foster, 2011). Children from poor homes also feel unsafe, marginalized, threatened and vulnerable.

Impact of Interventions to this troubled family

The professional family social worker intervened and first concentrated on building rapport with the mother so as to know what was happening in the home. Through creating a good relationship with the mother, the family social worker was able to challenge her behaviour with ease. The efforts to understand this family are worthwhile because it helps the mother to express her feelings and mind so that she is assisted. (Crowther and Cowen, 2011). This is why the mother was able to work closely with the professional worker in order to solve the challenges faced by her family. The mother was given a chance to make her own decisions of seeing a doctor with the help of a social worker which shows compliance with Mental Health Act 2007.

The family social worker helped the mother to get health appointments that helped her to manage her anxiety. This was a very important move taken by the family social

worker because mother's mental health status was a very big risk to the children since the children entirely depended on her. (Morris, 2012). Therefore, it was important to fight the mother's anxiety. This yielded positive results because she overcame her anxiety and allowed her children to start attending school.

In addition, the family social worker helped the mother to move her children to a new school and nursery closer to their home and also escorted her on the new school run so that she could overcome her anxiety about the change. This was done with help of Local Authorities and the school community. Due to the professional intervention, the children's school attendance is at 100%, the eldest child is no longer caring for her younger siblings and the youngest started nursery. This was important because it aimed at safe guarding and promoting the welfare of the children in this family as suggested by assessment framework "Working Together to Safeguard Children A guide to inter-agency working to safe guard and promote the welfare of the children (2018). It is therefore very important to intervene early enough to help troubled families before they are completely vulnerable. (Family Intervention Practitioner, 2012).

It is worth noting that conditions at home improved greatly; the mother receives the right support for her mental health problems and this has helped her to set up a payment plan to get back in control of her finances. This intervention reduces on the risk of being evicted, and also will help the family jump from poverty to a middle income family since the mother is now ready to start working. This intervention could not have been very successful without the participation of other Agencies like Medical Doctors, Local Community Leadership, Volunteer groups among others.

Evaluation/Analysis of interventions

In the current Troubled Family Policy, in order to be considered part of the troubled family program, families must meet at least two of the following six indicators; Parents and children involved in crime or anti-social behaviour, children who have not been attending school regularly, children who need help (those identified as "in need" or subject to a Child Protection Plan), adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion, or young people at risk of worklessness, families affected by domestic violence, and parents and children with a range of health problems. (Hayden and Parr, 2019)

The troubled family policy is based on a model of whole-family based care, where one dedicated key worker engages with the family, develops a plan to tackle any issues that the family may be facing, and serves as the single point of contact for referrals to a range of supportive services. (IPsos Mori Public Affairs, 2020). For instance, the professional family social worker in the case did her best to consider all the factors in this family as a whole to develop a strategy for this family.

The Troubled Families Programme (2015-2021) aims to support up to 400,000 complex families with multiple high-cost problems. It is designed to help families with severe and persistent problems make significant and sustained progress towards their goals. Through interventions with this troubled family, key issues have been addressed by working on the housing conditions and helping the mother through parental support.

The initiative to manage lack of education was done through introducing children to early child care and education because it reduces the risk of vulnerability that come along with education inequality in the society. (Kydd and Poe, 2012). According to United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1991), children from poor backgrounds should also be considered for quality health and education as well as preventing education segregation to encourage children to attend school. Ensuring education equality in the society was made possible to this family because of school being supportive and encouraging the mother to allow children to go school.

Local authorities in partnership with Government, schools, volunteer groups, police, and medical practitioners have shown innovations for the implementation of the Troubled Families Programme, like mothers joining parental programmes that equips them with all ways of parenting. From the case, we can tell that the local authorities were concerned about this family by questioning mother's capacity to meet her children's needs. It is evident in the case that the family has received reasonable support from the local authorities through Troubled family programme to ensure that all needs of the children and the family are covered. This has helped to manage major risk factors to vulnerability in the case. (DCLG, 2017).

The professional family worker in the care followed key perceptions of the Troubled Family program by ensuring early intervention with this family in order to avoid

statutory intervention. According to Troubled Families Programme National Evaluation (2020), early intervention with troubled families helps to manage vulnerability by enhancing capacity of both the parents and children as identified by interventions in the case because the UK Government is mandated to protect all the citizens especially troubled families,

The family social worker in the case also did her best to manage risks of vulnerability in the case by building resilience to overcome any risks. This is initiative in partnership with schools and local community helped children to go back school, thereby reducing on chances of being socially abused, but instead increased on social interaction. This leads to better physical growth, and mental development in the children. (Bewley, George, and Rienzo, 2016).

According to Troubled Families Programme National Evaluation (2020), keyworkers think that improving access and links to mental health services would make the programme more effective. This is why the family social worker in the case begun by helping the mother to over her mental health problems by helping her fight anxiety and ensuring she attends her medical appointments. This initiative has promoted objectives of trouble families programme and reduced risks of vulnerability the family is exposed to. Solving parent's mental health problems has acted as a key in making the programme effective for service "transformation" in regards to helping this troubled family. (Blade, Erskine and Day, 2016).

Keyworkers are positive about the Troubled Families Programme in their local area in relation to both preventing and resolving children becoming children in need (as defined under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989) and being stepped up to being on a child protection plan. The professional family social worker did the best think to put the children first by ensuring that they are protected from any kind of vulnerability raised in the case. This was done by ensuring that they protected from mother's mental health, protected from lack of education, and ensuring that they accessing better housing conditions and proper sanitation.

However, there was a delay in interventions because the mother's situation was already worse before the social worker intervened. People in the community could have intervened early and contacted the responsible bodies like Mental Illness Professionals. People around the mother could have already identified her stress and

depression before she became mentally ill to the extent of putting the children at risk of vulnerability.

As seen in the case, the people were concerned whether the mother would meet the needs of the children. However, they failed to respond in time when the children were missing school. Together with government and schools, the community would have intervened to help the children before the family was classified as troubled.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Troubled Family Programme has led to the continued development of multi-agency working which contributes to the success of the programme. The programme has greatly contributed to communities in the United Kingdom like Portsmouth as revealed by the case. This particular involved many professionals and agencies to ensure the interventions are successful with a positive impact on this family. Through many initiatives and multi-disciplinary services, interventions were made to help the family as a whole in order to manage the risks of vulnerability to the children and the whole family. The family is appreciated for tackling major risk factors of vulnerability by helping the mother with her mental health, ensuring parental support, improving conditions at home, and above all, ensuring that children attend school. In general, the programme has improved access to mental health services, increased financial resources, flexibility over timescales and outcomes during intervention and has led to stable families and more so the welfare of children as guaranteed under section 10 of the Children Act, 2004, like is seen in the case of troubled families in Portsmouth.

In conclusion therefore, there are many troubled families all over the world in both developing and developed countries. The respective governments in partnerships with other agencies like UNICEF should make it a priority to help troubled families by tackling major risk factors of vulnerability like; poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, chronic illness, disability, racism, alcohol and drug abuse among others. However, the Troubled Family programme still has challenges with finding reliable support from partner organizations to deliver solutions for troubled families.

Recommendations

Since most of the troubled and vulnerable families in the local authorities, government through partner networking should provide more funding to the local

authorities to facilitate programs aimed at helping these troubled families. This will enable Local authorities to form support groups, volunteering groups, parent support projects, forming adolescent mentoring programmes, and reducing poverty in the community.

Government programmes directed to helping troubled families should focus more on person centered approach by working with families instead of just working for these troubled families. Putting the families at the centre of the intervention makes the work of a family social worker easy since the families will be corporative and positive to change hence realising more positive outcomes.

Troubled Families' programmes should focus on providing parental support by increasing parental employment, parental involvement in volunteer activities, equipping parents with parenting skills, and forming home visiting programs. Parental support will eventually solve multiple problems faced by troubled families like; unemployment, poverty, social isolation, mental health and chronic illness, relationship problems, and depression.

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