



Children, Young People and Families (BMHP5004_LON)

Assessment Component 1

Case study - Written Report

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Learner declaration

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I have read the Student Academic Integrity Policy and understand its implications.

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Introduction:

Vulnerability is a term generally used to describe all the people who are more likely to be exposed to risks than others. The term vulnerability is applied in many instances where the situation is envisaged would yield a poor outcome, risk, or danger. From the above statements, one can say that the word vulnerability is the situation of being too weak to defend or help oneself. This can apply to children, young people or families and they can be vulnerable in relation to lack of food, education, exploitation, domestic violence, drug abuse or disability (Shah et al, 2015)

In our society, parents are the key protectors and guides of children and young adults, and as such, where one parent or both are missing, the child or children are very likely to become vulnerable. One of the aims of the family structure is to provide its components with shared social, emotional, and economic security (Hidayati, L. 2020). This family in this case study lacked all these.

Vulnerability is most times viewed from the following three perspectives.

1. Material aspect - this includes money, food, clothing, shelter, healthcare, and education.
2. Emotional aspect - including care, love, support, space to grieve and containment of emotions.
3. Social aspects - includes an absence of supportive peer groups, role models to look up to or of guidance in difficult situations and risks in the immediate environment (Shah et al, 2015)

The following could also be classified as being vulnerable, Children and families showing traces or living in areas that have a high tendency of being harmed, this might include poverty and domestic violence

Case Study

In my case study, I am looking at the troubled family in Portsmouth. This is a family of four, made up of a single mum and her three children. Their mum was battling mental health issues and was unable to do daily tasks. She was so much in debt and was awaiting eviction because of rent arrears. She was not motivated to work because of her mental health issues. The home was dilapidated without a functional cooker. The children were out of school because she feared they would be taken away from her. The social services were aware of the plight of the family and had concerns about her ability to meet the needs of the children. The eldest daughter had the responsibility of caring for her younger ones. This falls in the category of children caring for their fellow children.

The family in the case study can be regarded as a vulnerable family because, a) Their mum had mental health issues that affected her ability to manage the family. b) The two older children were not attending school and the youngest was not in nursery, thereby being denied one of the basic rights of children which is education. c) There was an eviction notice pending because of arrears of rent, this points to poverty. d) The eldest daughter most times was the carer for her younger siblings, e) The conditions at their home were very poor and they had no cooker with which to cook their food.

With their mum's mental health situation, if she does not receive help soon, her situation might worsen and both she and the children will become more vulnerable. All the instances itemised above are great signs that mum and her children were all prone to being vulnerable. With the children not attending school, this will affect them since they are not able to meet and interact with other children of their age. Since the children are powerless

because they are dependent on their mother who herself is overwhelmed with her mental health issues and her indebtedness.

Since their mother did not allow them to go to school and the little one from going to nursery, which was contrary to the Education Act (Education Act, 1981) for fear of them being taken away from her, she was therefore hiding them from the system. These children lived in an abhorrent situation with signs of neglect and possible harm.

The squalor under which they lived reflected by a broken-down cooker and being in arrears with rent payment paints a picture of poverty and it is one of the hallmarks of vulnerability.

All the above-mentioned factors point towards risks of vulnerability, and they are amongst the listed categories of vulnerability. They are, 1) Children in families that show signs or live where there are signs of poverty and 2) Children caring for either their parents or their siblings. The case of this family also shows a case of a combination of vulnerabilities, in this instance, their mum has mental health issues, while there are traces of poverty in the family and the children are out of school (Children's Commissioner, 2019)

Analysis

As a result of the state of the family, there was a need for an intervention of the relevant health and social care agencies to ameliorate the situation the family found itself in by stepping into their matter. In this instance, the intervention was seen from the social services, schools, council, and the medical team.

The children in this case study are facing neglect from their mother, who for her own selfish reasons refused to send them to school and nursery. The fact that they are not attending school would lead them to have problems with communication and fitting in with other children in society. The combined situation of communication and apparent lack of care for these children could further lead to the development of mental health issues in them.

The mother of the children in this case study was mentioned to have had mental health issues. This will explain the reason she battled with depression, anxiety, and a personality disorder, she must in addition be suffering from schizophrenia and bipolar disorder too, these are all attributes of mental health disease.

The first child was made to carry out household chores which included taking care of her siblings and doing the house shopping all by herself. As a result of the heap of work piled on the first child, she rarely had time for her own life, and she had a disrupted social life.

From the case study, the social services got concerned and assigned a family worker to the family, who stepped into their matter with so much professionalism. She first worked hard to understand the happenings in the family before working to gain the confidence of their mum. The family worker then leveraged her knowledge of the family and the rapport built with their mum to challenge her behaviour and ineptitude without making her feel bad. The family worker used the SMART criteria in handling the situation of the family. Where SMART as an acronym stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely (Smart Goals, 2021)

In this family's case, the multi-disciplinary team expected to step in to ameliorate the crisis therein are the social services, who stepped in with the family worker, the teachers who stepped in through the schools and the GP who saw to the treatment of the mother who had mental health issues. Multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) are ways of different health and care

services to assess, plan and organise care services to take care of the individuals or family needs (Multidisciplinary-teams, 2020)

Evaluation:

In line with section 17 of the Children's Act 1989, It behoves the local council to provide for the needs and look after the welfare of the children in that council and their families. It is on this premise that the council sent in the family worker to arrest the impending damage to the family.

With the arrival of the Family worker, things began to turn around for good in the family. She created an environment built on trust and got to know the family chemistry very well. With the trust created she challenge the children's mother without her reacting negatively.

The council stepped in with an early intervention which is usually given to families once a trace of difficulty is noticed. It is known also as early help (NSPCC, 2021). Since the case of the mum and her children was a known case to the social services, it did not take long before they acted by sending the family worker. Her arrival yielded immediate results and helped in turning the situation of the family around.

The local council is ideally placed to deliver an early intervention to avoid the pitiable situation the family in the case study faced. This includes the children's services, youth services, and mental health services, also the education and public health service too (LG Association, 2018)

It is worthy to note that the aim of Early Help is targeted at parents, children, and families with much focus on the children. They help families facing much hardship by helping to make their environment much convivial for both children and parents. They also help in turning negative character or behaviours of the whole family members to positive. This family got an intervention, but it did not come early enough.

In the case of this family, the family worker was able to turn the setting in the family around by, 1) She succeeded in making their mum start attending her health appointments and with this, she was able to manage her anxiety. 2) With her help a new school was gotten for the children of school age and a new nursery nearer to the house was also gotten for the last child. 3) The children responded positively and started being regular to school and were able to achieve 100% attendance in school. 4) The eldest child stopped being a carer to her younger siblings. 5) Their mum was able to set up a payment plan to help her get back control of her finances. 6) Mum now became willing to work and began with volunteering work.

Having seen and listed all the positives achieved in a very short time by the family worker in conjunction with the school, GP, and the council at large, it should be noted that they were slow to react to the plight of the mum and her three children. It is noted in the case study that, social services were aware of the situation within the family, and they were worried about the ability of the mum being able to meet the demands of the children.

This brings us to the issue of Safeguarding. This implies making sure children and adults who are vulnerable are kept safe and not mistreated or abused. Everyone has a responsibility to safeguarding the vulnerable in the society as enshrined in the Care Act (Care Act, 2014)

If safeguarding had been applied earlier in the matter of this mum and her three children, the plight of the family would have been a lot better. The family worker was sent to the family when the mum was almost giving up on being able to turn her life and her children's life around.

UNICEF recognises education as a crucial social and cultural right that has a very significant role to play towards the alleviation of poverty and child labour in society. If the above were to be taken seriously by the social service in Portsmouth, the children of that mum would not have lasted for too long before the attempt of intervention was made with the coming of the family worker.

Conclusion:

The case study of the troubled family in Portsmouth is a typical reflection of a vulnerable family that was redeemed by the system through what seemed like the universal provision in the Universal Targeted and Specialist Model of Support. The children benefitted from services that are available without any assessment being done for any child, young person, and their families in England.

While praising the state for its intervention through the family worker who applied the multi-disciplinary approach by involving the schools, GPs, and the council. It will be appropriate to point out that the intervention was late in coming and could have made a far greater impact on the family had they acted sooner than later. It is on record that the family was known to the social services long before they stepped in to ameliorate the situation of the family.

The council could have also provided them with a council accommodation, to help the finances of the family because part of the family's problem was not being able to pay rent and they were already in arrears, this may have contributed to the onset of the mental health crisis of the mother.

The successful reversal of the family situation for good because of the intervention of the system with the arrival of the family worker is very commendable.

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