

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

Assessment Component 1

Case study - Written Report

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Introduction

Case study: Troubled Families-Portsmouth

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/troubled-families-portsmouth>)

A single mother of 3 children is faced with difficulties to run her family due to her mental health problems that makes her unable to do her daily tasks as a mother. The family has financial issues because she is unable to pay rent arrears, and her home is in a poor condition. Due to her situation, her 3 children are unable to attend school even the youngest who is supposed to be in nursery school. People in her community are getting concerned about her condition asking whether she still has capacity to meet her needs and her children's needs.

After identifying this troubled family, interventions between the society, family and friends to develop management initiatives so that this family is helped. In the end, the family registered improvement in general aspects like education for children, improved mental health of mother, improve home conditions, and financial problems solved.

From the case, this family is considered troubled because it has multiple problems which might not be seen in the average yet put all the children at risk of vulnerability.

The problems can be summarized as; unemployment, poor home conditions, mental health issue of parents, financial problems, and children not attending school. (Ipsos Mori Public Affairs, 2017)

Case

Factors contributing to the risk of vulnerability

According to the case study, there are several elements that put the whole family and the children at of the risk of vulnerability. Vulnerability can be defined simply to mean being able to be attacked physically and/or emotionally basing on individual, environmental and political situations. (Brown, 2012). From the case, we can identify key cognitive, emotional and physical elements that make the whole family vulnerable including the children.

According to Department of Communities and Local Government (2017), This family is considered troubled and is at risk of vulnerability because the mother who is the “bread winner” is facing mental health difficulties that have generally demotivated her to work for the family. In addition to mental health problems, other multiple disadvantages of the mother include; unemployment and bankruptcy in the home. All these problems put the whole family at the risk of vulnerability. (Ipsos Mori Public Affairs, 2017)

The case also raises issues of maltreatment like poverty, poor housing conditions, poor education and health care, all which pose a risk of vulnerability to the three children and family at large. According to Shildrick and Rucell (2015), an individual is considered poor if he/she is unable to meet their minimum needs or for their family. Failure to pay rent arrears, and the eviction poses a risk of housing insecurity, homelessness for the children, and family separation which is an element of vulnerability to the children and the whole family.

According to the case, there is an issue of single parenting which exposes the children to a risk of vulnerability because the children depend on her. In case of anything like death, or sickness of the single mother, the children may be fully

vulnerable especially the youngest of them all who is supposed to be in nursery school.

The case raises an issue of income poverty due to financial difficulties the family is facing. The single mother of 3 has debts and rent arrears all which indicate poverty in the family. This has increased on parent's stress and has impaired her parenting practice since children are unable to attend school in addition to poor conditions at home. Children in this family are exposed to vulnerability because they will start feeling unsafe, socially isolated, marginalized, low self-esteem, less self-confidence, and are more likely to get mental health problems. (Wikle, 2018).

Analysis

According to the current Ipsos Mori Public Affairs (2017), this family is fit for consideration under the Troubled Family Program launched in 2011 in England, because the family has multiple disadvantages as described in the case study to include; anti-social behavior, children not attending school regularly, the mother is not working, mother at risk of financial exclusion due to failure to pay rent, mental health problems of the mother, and poor housing condition. Therefore, with the help of the local communities, I think it was a great decision to consider this family for the "Troubled Family Program".

Following the trouble family policy, government in partnership with the local authorities where this family lives are commended for the best decision to use "whole-family based care model" to help this troubled family. Through use of "whole-family based care model" the objectives of the Troubled Families Programme (2015-2021) have been achieved to a greater extent because many complex high-cost problems identified in the case have been solved.

The family worker involved in the case showed dedication while intervening with this family by doing her best to establish a good relationship with the mother which enabled her to understand the family more. According to Hogget and Frost (2018), it is very important for social workers to establish a good relationship with their clients while trying to understand troubled families because it makes them more corporative

and easy to deal with as recommended by Troubled Families Programme (2015-2021).

Having realized that the mother is the center of this troubled family, the family worker made a good decision to begin by helping the mother overcome her problems, and this would eventually solve the family problems as a whole. This is why the family worker started by ensuring that the mother gets her health appointments in order to deal with her mental problems, and this greatly helped the mother to manage her anxiety. By this intervention, the mother is receiving mental health treatment and greatly doing well in all aspects. The family worker promoted the policy of the program to ensure there is an improvement on parenting and mothering in the case through enabling behavioral change. (Gillies et al.,2017). The intervention is very effective on parenting and mothering because social services are no longer concerned about her parenting.

The family worker also realized that children are not attending school which puts them at the risk of vulnerability. According to the Children Act (1989), children should be protected and given basic needs including education. Therefore, she decided to work together with the mother of these children to move the children to a new school to enable them attain education as a basic need. In addition to helping in finding a new school, she also made it a point to accompany mum to school run to ensure the anxiety about the new school is worked on. Her intervention on the school matter was effective because the children are now attending school at 100% rate and doing well at school. Helping these children attain education as a basic need will help them change their lives socially, and will provide them with better employment opportunities and making well informed health choices. (Department of International Development, 2018).

To solve the financial risks of this troubled family, the family worker worked closely with the mother to establish a payment plan. According to Parr (2017), a payment plan is very effective for troubled families, especially those with financial issues because it increases the opportunities for outstanding bills to be paid for. This could be the reason why conditions at home are getting better and she is no longer at a

risk of being chased from the house because rent arrears will be paid through the payment plan. In addition, the mother is interested in working which has made take steps through volunteering. This will have a positive impact on the well faire of the family because a working mother is able to support the family financially, and the parenting will improve. (Liskova, 2018; Gillies et al., 2017; Jopling and Vincent, 2020).

Evaluation

In this case, the children are at a higher risk of vulnerability because all the elements of vulnerability identified in the case directly affect them. The elements are; poor housing conditions at home, lack of education, mother's mental health issues, mother's unemployment, mother's debts, and also the mother is unable to do her day-to-day tasks. However, through the family worker, management initiatives have been put in place to provide multi-disciplinary service so as to save the children and the whole family from vulnerability.

According to Arora et al. (2015), children from low income families should be protected from any political, environmental and economic elements that expose them to the risk of vulnerability. The Child Protection Strategy seeks to provide children in troubled families with; keeping children healthy and nourished, proper housing and sanitation, keeping children in school, and protecting children from violence, exploitation and abuse. Through the Trouble Family Program (2015-2021), the family worker used the following initiatives to provide multi-disciplinary services to this trouble family and manage the risk of vulnerability;

Participation in Early Child Care and Education. (ECEC).

The family worker managed to reduce the risk of vulnerability to the children by reducing the number of risks children are exposed to, and increasing protective measures. This was done through getting a new school for children and ensuring that the mother is supportive towards education of her children. It is evident from the case study that the three children are from a lower background, and therefore it was best to ensure they participate in Early Child Care and Education as recommended

by UNICEF through Child Protection Strategy. Participation in Early Child care and Education can be achieved by partnering with agencies like; schools, education department, Human Rights Commission and Ministry of Education. Education for the children was very important because education disparities in the community puts the children at risk of vulnerability. (Sentenac et al., 2019). The decision to take children to new skills reduces future risk that make children vulnerable like illiteracy, poverty, social exclusion and risks of abuse among others. (Radcliff et al., 2019). The Department of Education in England developed education policies which give children a right of education and this has been achieved.

Parenting Support

Through the Troubled Families Program (2015-2021), family based interventions have been put in place to support the mother in the case. This was done by local community, volunteer agencies, and other NGOs in partnership with the family worker. The risk of vulnerability to the three children has managed by home visiting programs to ensure the mother gets her mental health treatment which improves her parenting skills and capabilities. The family worker in the case supported the mother to manage her anxieties, and this helped to manage risks of vulnerability on children because mental health of parents is important for the children. (Jopling and Vincent, 2020).

Broadening reduction in child poverty

The case identified elements of income poverty due to the inability to pay rent arrears, and poor conditions at home. Income poverty exposes a risk of vulnerability to children because they will miss out on; quality education, quality health care, proper feeding, and proper housing and sanitation. (Wikle, 2018). Through the Troubled Family Policy, and other agencies like local authorities, NGOs, volunteer groups, income poverty in the case has been effectively managed by increasing parental employment, and by advising the mother to get a payment plan and volunteering a step to employment. From this initiative, income poverty in the case has reduced since the conditions at home have improved, and rent arrears paid.

Conclusion

There are many factors that make families troubled in the society which eventually put the children, young people and family at risk of vulnerability. Usually, families become troubled because of; poverty, single parenting, unemployment, illness, relationship problems, disability, family violence, racism, alcoholism and drug abuse, social isolation, and depression among others. Away from these, there are other complex factors that contribute to vulnerability in families including; lack of social support, inefficient law enforcement, lack of adequate public policy, and cultural perceptions.

As identified in the case, this family is troubled because of single parenting, poverty, unemployment, and mental illness of the mother. To a greater extent, the intervention by troubled family policy to help the troubled family has been very impactful and effective on this family. In conclusion therefore, children in this troubled family are no longer exposed to risks of vulnerability because of management initiatives employed to help the family; education for children, family support, parental support, and reduction on child poverty.

Recommendation

Government should engage and partner with many agencies like; Police, Schools, local communities, Volunteer groups and Non-Government Organizations like UNICEF, WFP, World Bank among others to increase the struggle and facilitation to help troubled families.

Government should ensure easy access to basic needs like food, shelter, and education at lower or no cost to the trouble families especially those located in deprived areas with hunger, poor health services, education inequalities, poor sanitation among others. This will help people in these to access basic needs hence reduces risks of vulnerability like poverty.

The local authorities should be availed with more support financially to ensure people in their communities are helped by coming up with programs to benefit the whole communities. With this, the trouble families will eventually reduce.

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