

# The Neglect of Teenage Neglect: research, policy and practice

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# Presentation outline

*'Neglect is when parents ignore you ... or leave you and you get hurt...if you're bullied at school and you have no one to turn to'*

- Why is teenage neglect important?
- What does research tell us? 3 studies: 2011-2016; adolescent neglect; safeguarding young people, aged 11-17; neglected adolescents research programme
- What is teenage neglect; what are the causes of neglect; what are the consequences of neglect?
- How can we intervene to assist neglected teenagers?

# Why is teenage neglect important?

*'We don't get the category 'neglected teenagers'...they become 'drug users' or it's the 'behaviour' which presents when they're that age' (professional)*

- Child maltreatment, including neglect, is not just something that happens to young children
- Neglect is the most prevalent form of maltreatment within the family in the general population – 5% for under-11's; 13 % for 11-17 (NSPCC, 2011)
- New registrations of neglected teenagers are greater than registrations for other forms of abuse in younger age categories
- Neglect is most prevalent form of abuse found in Serious Case Reviews (60%; 2009-11, Brandon *et al.* 2013)
- Teenagers can suffer greatly: quarter of Serious Case Reviews (young people aged 10-17); 21% on young people aged 14+ (2007-11)

# What is teenage neglect?

*'Neglect?...when you don't get fed proper, I'm always looking for food'*

## ***Teenage neglect hasn't received the attention of 'child neglect'***

- Lack of attention to developmental issues of 'emerging adulthood' – as young people grow older, their needs vary, so must definitions of neglect
- Neglect as 'an act of omission' – or a failure to act – is a defining feature of *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, HM Government 2015).
- For teenagers the boundaries between neglect and maltreatment are often more problematic: e.g. when a young person is forced to leave home through abuse ('act of commission') and finds themselves 'neglected', hungry and homeless
- Exploring teenagers views of 'neglect' is essential, there is evidence that they underestimate neglect and see neglect as part of a wide spectrum of harm
- Need to know more about specific groups of neglected teenagers – disabled young people; young carers; black and ethnic minority and faith groups
- Important to have young people's and professional views –agree thresholds for intervention

# 'lack of attention to developmental issues'

WHEN I SAID I WANTED YOU  
TO GET A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF  
TEENAGERS I MEANT FOR YOU TO READ UP ON  
CHILD DEVELOPMENT!



# What are the causal associations with 'child' neglect?

## ***Assessment Framework***

*Family history and functioning*

**Child Abuse and Neglect Research – Risk Factors**

**Parenting - low warmth, low control**

***Domestic violence***

***Adult mental health problems – having suffered maltreatment***

***Parental substance abuse***

Parental learning disability

Childhood disability

Lone, younger, unsupported parents

Larger families, unplanned pregnancies

*Wider family*

Low support from own family

*Employment, housing income*

Poverty, social deprivation, poor education  
low income

*Social integration*

Less cohesive, poor attachments

*Community resources*

Less integration and support

# What are the causal associations of teenage neglect – parental behaviours?

*In 2015 the Children's Society (in consultation with York University) surveyed a nationally representative sample of 2000 young people, aged 12-13 and 14-15, about their experiences of four aspects of parenting: physical care; emotional support; supervision; and, educational support. Key findings:*

## ***Scale of neglect***

- Most young people are well cared for in both age groups
- Around one in 12 (8%) teenagers are not receiving the most basic forms of emotional support – they rarely get help when they have a problem, support when upset or positive encouragement
- Around one in 12 (8%) teenagers are inadequately supervised – their parents hardly ever want to know their whereabouts, or seem concerned if they are late home
- One in twenty (5%) teenagers are not given sufficient physical care to preserve their health, or are nursed by their parents when they fall ill
- One in 25 (4%) teenagers have parents who show little or no interest in their education

# What are the causal associations of teenage neglect – parental behaviours?

*'I get left alone when my mum goes to work...she leaves at 6.30am and comes home around 7.30pm...I am also left on my own at weekends...mum says she has to work to get what we need'*

## ***Contexts for neglect***

- Young people who were poor (lacking possessions, resources or experiences common to their peer group) were more likely to be neglected than their peers
- Young people who lived with a lone parent experienced less frequent parental inputs in relation to educational support and physical care than those in families with both parents or a parent and step parent
- Young people with a step-parent reported less support around education
- Boys reported less parental supervision than girls - but for physical, educational and emotional support mean scores were similar for girls and boys



# What are the causal associations with teenage neglect – parental behaviours?

*'I couldn't get a bath everyday...I had to go and stay with my aunt...I was underweight...the school was concerned 'cos my skin was dead pale'*

## ***Associations between neglect, risk taking and well-being***

- Young people who reported multiple forms of neglect (2 plus categories of parenting) had significantly worse levels of well-being – poorer life satisfaction than those neglected in relation to one type of parenting
- Neglected young people were more likely to truant and get 'really drunk'
- Many neglected young people reported 'bad health' compared to the 'cared for'

## ***The importance of 'emotional support'***

- Emotional neglect was the most reported form of neglect for 14 and 15 year olds – regardless of family form and gender
- Higher levels of emotional support were consistently linked to high levels of well-being – 14-15 year olds feeling better about themselves and their lives
- Fewer 14-15 year olds reported higher levels of emotional support compared to 12-13 year olds

# What are the consequences of teenage neglect?

*'Neglect? you feel alone...self harm, you could think it is your fault'*

- Neglect that starts for the first time in teenage years is as damaging as neglect that starts in childhood
- There is strong evidence of an association between neglectful parenting and depression in teenagers
- Neglect has a stronger impact on young people's mental health than other forms of maltreatment
- Neglectful parenting is associated with; drug and alcohol abuse; early sexual activity and running away from home
- Neglectful parenting contributes to: behavioural problems at school; poor academic focus - 'high levels of task irrelevant behaviour', and low levels of academic achievement

# What are the consequences of teenage neglect?

*'The impact of neglect?...boozing, allowing yourself to be abused, putting yourself down, used by the other sex, taking it out on people'*

- Parental behaviours study identified associations with poor physical health, truancy and heavy drinking
- Neglectful parenting has a stronger association with late adolescent offending, violent behaviour than physical and sexual abuse
- Low parental warmth, involvement and control are linked with a higher incidence of antisocial behaviour and offending
- The evidence above suggests that the experience of neglect during adolescence is a high risk factor for poor adult outcomes, including careers, mental health and well-being

# How can we intervene?

## Primary prevention

*'All my work with teenagers is about trying to rectify neglect of some sort'* (Professional view)

### ***Preventing neglect before it occurs through universal or targeted services***

- Services promoting the well-being and parenting skills of families with teenagers – focus on parenting behaviours
- Enabling young people to recognise neglect and what help is available - guides, information, PHSE, social media
- Creating a positive culture towards teenagers - in schools, colleges, communities
- Youth services – engaging young people in 'positive activities' – positive role models and mentoring
- Preventative LCSB plans – recognising needs of teenagers
- Recognising the relationship between social deprivation and maltreatment and the implications for social policy in reducing inequality

# How can we intervene?

## Secondary prevention

*'I think that parents do not always have help, and could have had difficulties themselves'* (young person)

### ***Early interventions when problems first arise through informal or formal responses***

- Taking early referrals and 'general concerns' seriously – challenging stereotypes of 'chronic neglect'
- Informal responses – schools, colleges, health services
- *Common Assessment Framework/Assessment Framework* – the importance of the voice of young people in the process; implications of both chronic and serious incidents; contextual issues; externalising behaviours
- Multi-agency working with families to reduce neglect and consequences for young person
- 'The team around the child', 'family', or 'school'
- Greater awareness of research findings – in training

# How can we intervene?

## Secondary prevention

*'It's a really scary place to be if you're 13 to 18 and nobody cares about you or loves you...and out there you're seen to be old enough to take responsibility for yourself (Professional)*

### ***Intervening – Child protection system: research shows that:***

- Child protection system not seen as most effective way to meet the needs of 'older' young people – less likely to have a initial and core assessment, or be the subject of Section 47 enquiry
- More likely to follow 'Child in Need' pathway and 'Common Assessment Framework'
- Referring professionals viewed the consequences of maltreatment to be less serious when young people were older - seen as more 'resilient', more 'adult', more able to seek help
- Referring professionals also influenced by likelihood of children's services taking action and by perceived negative consequences for young people of 'care'

# How can we intervene?

## Secondary prevention

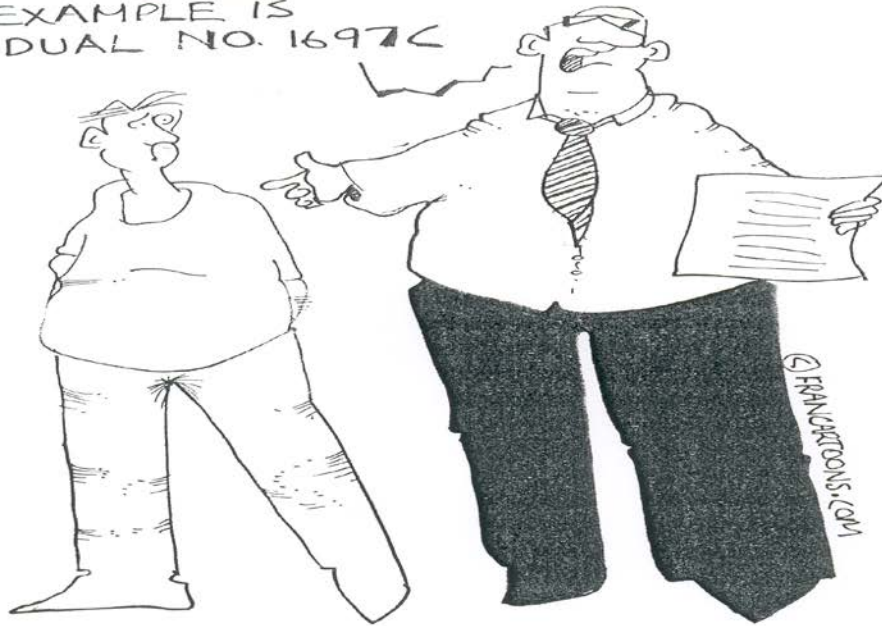
*'Talk to young people, make them feel they can trust you...be understanding – not judgemental...don't be too intimidating'* (young people's views)

### ***Intervening – Child protection system: research shows that;***

- For young people effective interventions based on good quality relationships
- For young people barriers to seeking help: lack of awareness of services and access to them; consequences of disclosing abuse for self and family; and trust and confidentiality of professionals
- Seek help from peers and 'family'
- Young people's views:
  - Be seen as an individual - be listened to and have a choice
  - More clarity about the role of different professionals
  - Accessibility and continuity of relationships
  - Confidentiality and trust

# 'Be seen as an individual'

WE LIKE TO TREAT ALL OUR  
YOUNG PEOPLE AS INDIVIDUALS..THIS  
FOR EXAMPLE IS  
INDIVIDUAL NO. 1697C





# How can we intervene? Tertiary prevention – community responses

## *Prevent the recurrence or persistence of problems*

- Little UK literature on evaluated interventions specifically on teenage neglect and maltreatment
- Good quality assessments - the *Assessment Framework* – whether to shift focus away from family to young person?
- Dedicated teenage support teams – ‘wrap around’ multi-agency approaches working with family and consequences for young person
- Identify key worker – importance of individual relationship and continuity
- Local Authority and Third Sector Projects working with young people in response to general or specific issues, for example, young runaways, young carers, sexual exploitation

# How can we intervene?

- **Prevention** through universal and targeted services - how society sees and includes or excludes young people
- **Early intervention**
  - Reducing parental neglect – parenting behaviours
  - Focus on increasing young people’s awareness – and control
  - *Common Assessment Framework/Assessment Framework*
  - ‘Team around’ approaches with key worker
- **When problems persist**
  - Shift of focus - working with the consequences of neglect for the young person, in the community or in care
  - *Assessment Framework* – identify network, multi-agency, team around
  - Importance of key worker - building resilience, or therapeutic intervention
- **Serious Case reviews** – never give up!

# Selected research sources and resources

## **Adolescent Neglect: research, policy and practice**

- Raws, P (2016) *Parenting Matters, the first report from a new research programme on adolescent neglect, Executive Summary*, The Children's Society
- Stein, M., Rees, G., Hicks, L. and Gorin, S. (2009) *Neglected Adolescents – Literature Review*, Research Brief, London, DSCF.
- Rees, G., Stein, M., Hicks, L. and Gorin, S. (2011) *Adolescent Neglect, Research, Policy and Practice*, London, JKP.
- Hicks and Stein (2013) Understanding and working with adolescent neglect: perspectives from research, young people and professionals, *Child and Family Social Work*.
- Hicks, L. and Stein, M. (2010) *Neglect Matters. A Multi-agency Guide for Professionals Working Together on Behalf of Teenagers*, London, DCSF.

## **Safeguarding young people who are maltreated**

- Rees, Gorin, Jobe, Stein, Medforth, Goswami (2010) *Safeguarding Young People: Responding to young people aged 11-17 who are maltreated*, Executive Summary, London, The Children's Society.
- Gorin and Jobe(2012) Young People who have been maltreated; different needs – different responses? *BJSW*, 1-17.
- Jobe and Gorin(2013) 'If kids don't feel safe they don't do anything': young people's views on seeking and receiving help from Children's Social Care Services in England, *Child and Family Social Work*, 18, pp 429-438.
- On serious case reviews see: Sidebotham *et al.* (2011); Brandon *et al.* (2008; 2013).

# Selected research sources and resources

## Research and policy on 'child neglect'

- Brandon *et al* (2014) *Missed opportunities: indicators of neglect – what is ignored, why, and what can be done*, DFE (includes recent research references on neglect and literature).
- Burgess *et al* (2013) *The state of child neglect in the UK*, Action for Children, University of Stirling.
- Action for Children (2014) *Child Neglect; The scandal that never breaks*, Action for Children.
- Radford *et al* (2011) *Child Abuse and Neglect in the UK Today*, NSPCC.
- NSPCC, Jutte *et al* (2014) *How safe are our children*, NSPCC.

## Practice on child neglect

- Daniel *et al* (2011) *Recognising and helping the neglected child: Evidence based practice for assessment and intervention*, JKP.
- Burgess *et al* (2013) *Action on Neglect, A resource pack*, Action for Children, University of Stirling.

## Research, Policy and practice on young people

- RIP and ADCS (2014) *That Difficult Age: Developing a more effective response to risks in adolescence*, RIP.
- Caw, J. and Sebba, J. (2013) *Team Parenting for Children in Foster Care: A model for integrated therapeutic care*, London, JKP.
- Hicks *et al* (2007) *Managing Children's Homes: Developing Effective Leadership in Small Organisations*, JKP.
- Berridge, D. *et al.* (2008) *Educating Difficult Adolescents*, London, JKP.
- Berridge, D. *et al.* (2011) *Raising the Bar? Evaluation of the Social Pedagogy Pilot Programme in Residential Children's Homes*, Research Brief, London, DFE.