

### *Communication – Context - Curiosity*

The NSCP published a thematic report into seven vulnerable adolescents in Newcastle who experienced risk outside the home. Public Health England identify that vulnerable children can be described as “any children at greater risk of experiencing emotional or physical harm and/or experiencing poor outcomes because of one or more factors in their lives.”

They were all males aged between 14-18 years at the time of the incident leading to their review. One was Asian British, another Black Caribbean and the rest were White British. They were all being brought up by their mother except one who had both his mother and father at home.

**Most of the young people had experience of growing up in poverty, domestic abuse, neglect, disrupted education, substance use, Additional common factors were Special Educational Needs and/or Neurodiversity as well as previous experiences of being harmed in the community.**

#### **Learning Points**

- ❑ Whilst the relationship between adverse experiences in childhood and adolescence are not predictive, experiencing trauma in childhood can lead to vulnerabilities and present risks to achieving better outcomes without effective early intervention.
- ❑ When a young person presents as not be ready to engage, practitioners should proactively consider why this might be the case.
- ❑ Cross referencing and sharing assessment findings between agencies assists practitioners to develop a shared understanding of the needs of the child and how best to communicate with them. This can result in a more meaningful multi-agency assessment and support.
- ❑ Early assessment, intervention, support and understanding of how to work with children with additional needs is crucial to being able to improve their life chances.
- ❑ Spending time with a child is a prerequisite to building a relationship of trust. This is critical in establishing the child’s voice and accessing their wishes and feelings.
- ❑ Tools such as genograms, timelines or eco maps can be key to engaging with a child and their family, allowing us to hear their story from their perspective and how they view their world.

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#### **Learning Points (continued)**

- ❑ Focusing only on behaviours and symptoms without reference to health and development and context means key information is not understood in terms of impact on need, risk, vulnerability and future outcomes.
- ❑ Understanding the level of drug use and how drugs are accessed is crucial to assessing the level of risk to the child.
- ❑ Understanding why the child is using drugs is crucial to supporting them to mitigate the risks from drug use and supporting them to stop using.
- ❑ Maximising the strengths within network of family and friends is crucial in supporting young people.
- ❑ Utilising the information that family members hold can help to develop an understanding of the child's needs, wishes and fears and support robust interventions when there are risks outside of the home.
- ❑ Missing out on school is highlighted as a significant factor that can contribute to the vulnerability of a child regardless of the reason they are not in school.
- ❑ Where a child is not in school or receiving an education professionals should consider this as a potential risk factor.
- ❑ Keeping a child engaged in some form of education even when their behaviour poses a risk to themselves and/or others can mitigate the risks.
- ❑ Professionals should consider being a victim and/or perpetrator of assaults, use of weapons, missing from home/school, offending and/or anti-social behaviour, links to older teenagers/adults as welfare issues. Regardless of whether there is proof, suspicions or rumours of this activity in the community this should be examined in respect of the impact for the young person.
- ❑ Early intervention is essential when there are concerns a young person is demonstrating any indications of the above behaviour.
- ❑ Critical or teachable moments, when the impact of what has happened is so significant that effective, should be a focus of interventions.
- ❑ Agencies, individually and collectively, need to understand the impact interventions have for a child and their family. The views of children and their families are crucial in understanding this.
- ❑ To effectively mitigate the risks outside the home to children and young people intervention needs to be timely, responsive, and robust with the child at the centre alongside meaningful disruption and diversion activity at community, city, regional and national level.