

Childhood Neglect: Improving Outcomes for Children

Learning Outcomes

To identify family and environmental factors which may contribute to neglect.

Audience Groups 1-8 (Working Together 2010)

Time 30 minutes

Key Reading

Recommended reading for trainer before delivering the presentation:

Handout H5 Structural factors affecting children and families/carers

It might be useful to source local and regional statistics to complement the national data presented in these notes. Try, for example, to compare data on educational outcomes and health data from different local areas.

Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion/Child Poverty Action Group
<http://www.childpovertytoolkit.org.uk>.

Jack, G. and Gill, O. (2003) *The Missing Side of the Triangle: Assessing the Importance of Family and Environmental Factors in the Lives of Children*. Barking: Barnardo's.

Reacroft, J. (2008) *Like any other child? Children and families in the asylum process*. London: Barnardos.

Ridge, T. (2009) *An Evidence Review of Children and Families' Experiences of Poverty*. Leeds: Child Poverty Unit.

Links to Common Core

Common Core 3 Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child (Skills: Relate, recognise and take considered action). Understand the key role of parents and carers in safeguarding and promoting children and young people's welfare and involve them accordingly, while recognising factors that can affect parenting and increase the risk of abuse (for example, domestic violence).

Identifying family and environmental factors which may contribute to neglect

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Presentation Notes

Learning Outcomes

Audience

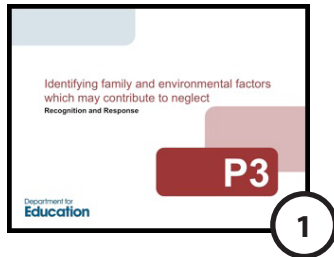
Time

Key Reading

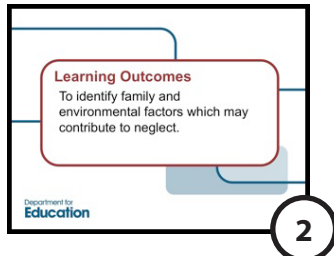
Links to Common Core

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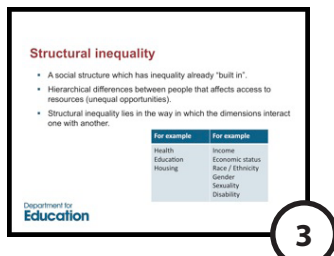


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Learning outcomes.



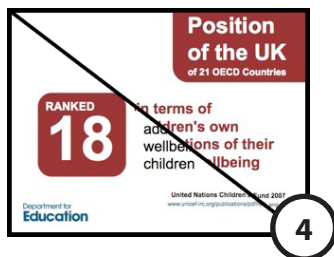
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Structural inequality lies in the way in which the dimensions laid out in the table in this slide interact with each another.

Four million children – or about one in three - currently live in poverty in the UK, which is one of the highest rates in the industrialised world. This is a shocking figure given the wealth of our nation.

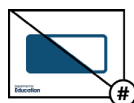
(source: <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/>)

Discussion point: What does this mean for the lived experience of these children and their families?

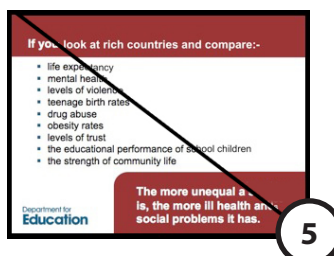


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OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development



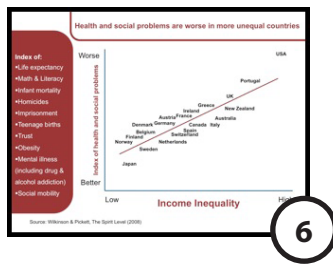
Please Note Thumbnails of slides shown with a split screen indicate that the slide contains an animated sequence.



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Identifying family and environmental factors which may contribute to neglect

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Child poverty and health

Key Facts:

- Infant deaths are 50 per cent more common among families from manual backgrounds than those from non-manual class backgrounds.
- Babies from manual class backgrounds are more likely to have a low birth-weight than those from non-manual class backgrounds – low birth-weight babies are at greater risk of mortality and morbidity during childhood.
- Studies have found a close association between mental disorder in children and economic disadvantage.

Source: Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion/Child Poverty Action Group
http://www.childpovertytoolkit.org.uk/images/File/CP_Health.pdf

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Child poverty and health

Key Facts:

- Children from the lowest income groups are more likely to be obese than those from top income groups.
- Children from manual class backgrounds are significantly more likely to die in accidents than other children.
- Research has found a very close association between teenage pregnancy and social and economic disadvantage.

Source: Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion/Child Poverty Action Group
http://www.childpovertytoolkit.org.uk/images/File/CP_Health.pdf

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Children from the lowest income groups are more likely to be obese than those from top income groups, and children from manual class backgrounds are significantly more likely to die in accidents than other children. Research has found a very close association between teenage pregnancy and social and economic disadvantage.

Source: Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion/Child Poverty Action Group
http://www.childpovertytoolkit.org.uk/uimages/File/CP_Health.pdf

Child poverty and education

Key Facts:

- By age three, being in poverty makes a difference equivalent to nine months' development in school readiness.
- During their years at school, children in receipt of free school meals (a key indicator of poverty) do progressively worse on average at school than their peers.
- Children who do badly at primary school are less likely to improve at secondary school if they are poor.

Source: Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion/Child Poverty Action Group
http://www.childpovertytoolkit.org.uk/images/File/CP_Education.pdf

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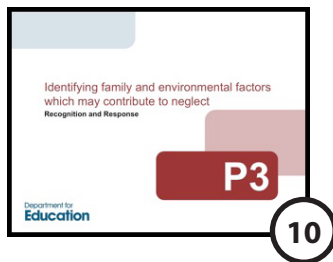
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By age three, living in poverty makes a difference equivalent to nine months' of development in school readiness:

- During their years at school, children in receipt of free school meals (a key indicator of poverty) do progressively worse on average at school than their peers.
- Children who do badly at primary school are less likely to improve at secondary school if they are poor.

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- Children from poor families are more likely to have poor academic qualifications.
- Young people with parents in manual occupations are far less likely than others to go to university and only 1 in 6 of students at top universities come from lower socio-economic back-grounds.

Source: Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion/Child Poverty Action Group

http://www.childpovertytoolkit.org.uk/uimages/File/CP_Education.pdf



Households in poverty are more likely than average to live in non-decent homes than other households and to live in poor quality environments.

Householders living in the most deprived areas are more likely to live in overcrowded homes than those in other areas - over two-thirds of over-crowded households in England are in the 10 per cent most deprived areas.



Those living in the most deprived areas are more likely to be dissatisfied with the area they live in than those in other areas, and those living in the most deprived areas are also more likely to say that there is a problem in their area such as drugs.

Source: Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion/Child Poverty Action Group

http://www.childpovertytoolkit.org.uk/uimages/File/CP_Housing.pdf

A briefing paper to the House of Commons by Wilson (2011) noted that in 2010 five per cent of households were homeless and living in temporary accommodation.

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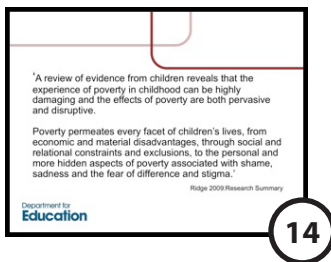
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Discussion point: ask the group to consider possible factors that increase the likelihood of poverty. It should be stressed that the presence of such factors will not automatically result in greater poverty or neglect, but that the accumulation of factors could increase the likelihood of poverty, and the possibility of a child being at greater risk of neglect. Factors could include:

- Children of **lone parents** are at greater risk of living in poverty than children in couple families. Before housing costs over a third, 35%, (50% after housing costs) of children living in lone parent families are poor, compared with less than a fifth, 18%, of children in couple families.
- Children in **large families** are at far greater risk of poverty than children from small families: two fifths, 40%, of children in families with four or more children are poor, compared with under a fifth, 19%, of children in one-child families.
- **Disabled children** are more likely than their non-disabled peers to live in poverty as a result of lower parental incomes (because parents need to look after disabled children and so cannot work) and the impact of disability-related additional costs (an impact which is not captured by official figures).
- Children with **disabled parents** face a significantly higher risk of living in poverty than those of non-disabled parents. The main reason for this is that disabled parents are much less likely to be in paid employment, and also suffer the impact of additional disability-related costs that sap family budgets.
- Children growing up in **social housing** (either local authority or housing associations) face a higher risk of being poor. 49% of children in local authority accommodation are poor before housing costs (rising to 58% after housing costs). Poor children in social housing are also a large proportion of all poor children. Though the numbers in private rented accommodation are smaller, these children also face a higher risk of living in poverty.
- **Black and minority ethnic children** - children living in households headed by someone from an ethnic minority are more likely to be living in a poor household. This is particularly the case for those households headed by someone of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin, where well over half the children are living in poverty.
- **Asylum seekers** - there is no robust quantitative data on asylum seekers. However, parents in this group are prohibited from working and are only entitled to safety net support at a lower level than the usual income support or jobseekers allowance safety (which itself is paid below the poverty line).
- **Traveler and gypsy children** - there is a lack of robust quantitative data on Gypsy and Traveler families, including data on poverty. However, both practice knowledge and other studies show that some have few financial resources.
- **Children leaving care** - young people leaving care are likely to face multiple disadvantages including poverty. Those becoming looked after are also much more likely to have experienced poverty. This is a consequence of their pre-care, in-care, leaving care and after-care 'life course' experiences.

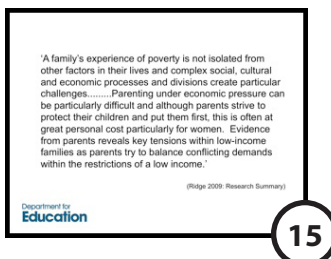
Source: Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion/Child Poverty Action Group
http://www.childpovertytoolkit.org.uk/uimages/File/CP_at%20Greatest%20Risk.pdf



In order to understand what this means in terms of the lived experience of families and children, the Department for Work and Pensions Child Poverty Unit commissioned a review of the literature on children's and families' experience of poverty (Ridge 2009). The report makes for sobering reading giving, as it does, a voice to those suffering disadvantage, exclusion and discrimination.

"A review of evidence from children reveals that the experience of poverty in childhood can be highly damaging and the effects of poverty are both pervasive and disruptive. Poverty permeates every facet of children's lives, from economic and material disadvantages, through social and relational constraints and exclusions, to the personal and more hidden aspects of poverty associated with shame, sadness and the fear of difference and stigma."

(Ridge 2009: Research Summary)

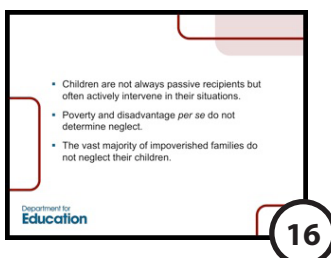


And for parents:

"A family's experience of poverty are not isolated from other factors in their lives and complex social, cultural and economic processes and divisions create particular challenges.....Parenting under economic pressure can be particularly difficult and although parents strive to protect their children and put them first, this is often at great personal cost particularly for women. Evidence from parents reveals key tensions within low-income families as parents try to balance conflicting demands within the restrictions of a low income."

(Ridge, 2009: Research Summary)

Parents report high levels of stress, often manifesting in physical and mental ill-health, feelings of isolation, frustration and helplessness. Stigma is often experienced as parents struggle to meet the needs of their families (and themselves) (see also Hooper et al. 2007). These reports also highlight that children are not always passive recipients but evidence the ways in which children actively intervene in their situations by, for example, looking for ways to increase the family income and by taking on the care of parents and siblings.



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Implications for practice

- Assessments tend to be 'poverty blind'.
- The relationship between poverty and disadvantage is complex.
- An approach that considers both 'public issues' and 'private troubles' is likely to be helpful.
- Need to locate children and families in their wider social and 'community' context.

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Evidence suggests that assessments are largely “poverty blind” with Jack and Gill (2003) drawing attention to the way in which the “third” side of the triangle is often poorly explored in assessments. Given the extent of poverty, inequality and social exclusion, and knowledge of how pervasive are the impacts on both family life and outcomes for children, this is problematic and fails to address important issues which contextualise the lived experience of children and young people.

The relationship between neglect and poverty and disadvantage is complex. Studies (as noted above) have clearly demonstrated a relationship but interpretation of that relationship has often been problematic. Poverty and disadvantage per se do not determine neglect. The vast majority of impoverished families do not neglect their children.

McSherry (2004) poses the question: “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” Is it poverty or neglect? Individual characteristics or structural inequalities? However, there is no doubt that the stress of living with disadvantage, discrimination and poverty can make child rearing a great deal harder. It is likely that a human rights approach to practicing assessment that seeks to understand the links between “public issues” and “private troubles” will enable a more holistic analysis and support a broader approach to intervention strategies.

By locating children and families within a wider “community” context, it is possible to explore collaborative and collective responses (Ferguson and Woodward 2009) and community based responses (Jack and Gill 2010; Mantle and Backwith 2010) and to begin to explore the implications for arguing for child protection as part of a Public Health agenda (see for example Barlow with Scott 2010) and reconsider the role of universal community based services.

Ecological approaches

Are based on the premise that the development and behaviour of individuals can be fully understood only in the context of the environments in which they live.

A systems framework is used to examine the mutual influence that the child, their family, friends, neighbours, community and wider society have upon one another.

It is a holistic model which focuses on the ways in which children's developmental needs, the capacity of their parents to respond appropriately to those needs and environmental factors interact with one another over time.

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Ecological framework

Addresses the context within which needs, risks and problems arise:

“Individuals do not live in a vacuum, rather they exist within complex systems made up of their immediate surroundings, social networks, cultural communities, set within a wider social structure.”

Ballwin and Walker in Adams et al (2005)

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