Understanding Adolescent Neglect

Research programme
# Adolescent Neglect

**Session content**

1. **Introduction**
   - Quiz

2. **What do we know about adolescent neglect / why is it important?**
   - Scale, consequences, outcomes
   - Definitional issues / methodological challenges

3. **The Children’s Society’s new research programme**
   - Findings from first study
   - What next?
The Children’s Society

Over 130 years supporting the most disadvantaged children and young people.

Visit our archive online:
http://www.hiddenlives.org.uk
Work with vulnerable adolescents

Our services work with young people who …

• run away from home or care
• misuse substances
• are young carers
• are refugees / asylum seekers / migrants
• are sexually exploited (or at risk)
• are living in the care of a local authority

… and sometimes with their parents / families too.
Campaigns, policy and research

Visit our website – [www.childrenssociety.org.uk](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)
Children’s well-being research

10 years of ground-breaking research working with the University of York.

Over 50,000 children have been involved in surveys, focus groups and interviews.

Data used by Office of National Statistics.
ADOLESCENT NEGLECT QUIZ

5 minutes / 5 questions
Adolescent neglect: What we know about scale

Official figures – all children and young people

Rates of children subject to Child Protection Plan per 10,000

- Neglect
- Emotional
- Physical
- Sexual

Source: DSCF, 2009

QUIZ – Q 1)
Adolescent neglect: What we know about scale

Official figures - adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of maltreatment for CP Plans for 11-17-year-olds</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>3,640 (38%)</td>
<td>3,910 (37%)</td>
<td>4,170 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>1,190 (12%)</td>
<td>1,270 (12%)</td>
<td>1,210 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>880 (9%)</td>
<td>940 (9%)</td>
<td>950 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional abuse</td>
<td>2,970 (31%)</td>
<td>3,130 (29%)</td>
<td>3,330 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>1,010 (10%)</td>
<td>1,440 (13%)</td>
<td>1,660 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>9,690</td>
<td>10,690</td>
<td>11,320</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DfE CiN data

QUIZ – Q1a)
Adolescent neglect: What we know about scale / consequences

Serious Case Reviews

- Neglect is much more prevalent in serious case reviews than had originally been understood (neglect found in 60% of 139 reviews from 2009-2011)

- Neglect *can* be life threatening and needs to be treated with as much urgency as other categories of maltreatment

- Neglect with the most serious outcomes is not confined to the youngest children, and occurs across all ages

Brandon *et al.* (2013)
Adolescent neglect: What we know about scale

NSPCC, Lifetime prevalence of neglect (Radford et al., 2011)

Under 11s: 5%
11 to 17: 13%
18 to 24: 16%

QUIZ – Q 3) ????????
Adolescent neglect: What does it lead to?

- Research (on maltreatment) links neglect to negative consequences for physical health, emotional / psychological health, mental health, safety, education, family responsibilities, anti-social behaviour / offending, risky behaviours (substance misuse).

- **The Rochester Youth Development Study (RYDS)** demonstrated negative outcomes specifically for neglect in adolescence:
  - Maltreatment which begins during adolescence is more damaging than maltreatment which started and ceased during childhood. It leads to “involvement in criminal behaviours, substance misuse, health-risking sexual behaviours and suicidal thoughts”.
  - Neglect during adolescence is as damaging as other forms of maltreatment, increasing the risk of arrest, offending and violent crime (late adolescence) / the risk of arrest and drug use (early adulthood).  
    
    (Thornberry et al., 2010)
Adolescent neglect: Why it is important

- Many adolescents are neglected
- Negative consequences. Significant, poor outcomes (RYDS)

... but

- Policy, practice and research has focused on early years
- Little is known about causes and contexts
- Lack of effective professional response
New research programme

Broad aims

- What is ‘adolescent neglect’?
- How much adolescent neglect is there in England?
- What are the contexts for adolescent neglect?
- What are the consequences of adolescent neglect?

First study
(publication in Feb 2016)

- National schools online surveys
- Around 2,000 young people in Years 8 and 10 (12-13 / 14-15-year-olds)
- Developed and used a new measure of ‘experiences of parenting behaviours’ – alongside indicators of well-being (initial findings in Good Childhood Report, 2014)
What is ‘adolescent neglect’ – officially?

Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2015

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.
What is ‘adolescent neglect’ - anecdotaly?

‘Neglect is when parents ignore you … or leave you and you get hurt … and you have no one to turn to … when you don’t get fed properly … I was underweight, my skin was dead pale.’

(Young person’s view)

‘All of my work with teenagers is about trying to rectify neglect of some sort.’

(Professional’s view)

(TCS, University of York, NSPCC: ‘Safeguarding Young People’, 2010)
### Parenting behaviours measure

#### EMOTIONAL SUPPORT (pilot items)

*In the last year how often did your parents, or the adults you live with …*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... help you if you had problems?</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... take care of you if you felt ill?</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... help you to do your best?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... praise you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... support you if you were upset?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... tell you they loved you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Parenting behaviours measure - final

In the last year how often did your parents, or the adults you live with ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Support</th>
<th>Emotional Support</th>
<th>Physical Care</th>
<th>Supervision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... show an interest in what you were doing at school?</td>
<td>... help you if you had problems?</td>
<td>... make sure you saw a doctor if you needed one?</td>
<td>... ask you where you were going when you went out?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... attend parents’ evenings at school?</td>
<td>... support you if you were upset?</td>
<td>... take care of you if you felt ill?</td>
<td>... like to know where you were after school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... keep track of how you were doing at school – by doing things like reading reports?</td>
<td>... tell you when they thought you had done something well?</td>
<td>... support you to look after your teeth and go to the dentist?</td>
<td>... expect you to call or text to let them know if you were going to be home late?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Parenting behaviours measure

## Creating scales:

### EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

*In the last year how often did your parents, or the adults you live with ...*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... help you if you had problems?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... support you if you were upset?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... tell you when they thought you had done something well?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SCORE for emotional support**  
$$3 + 3 + 4 = 10$$
Parenting behaviours

Supervision

% of young people

Overall score

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11 January 2016
Parenting behaviours

Findings for 14-15-year-olds (living in one home!):

- Most young people are well supported and cared for.
- Frequency of parenting behaviours varies by category.
  Half reported full scores for ‘physical care’ and 45% the same for ‘supervision’ – but less than a third reported full scores for the amount of ‘educational’ or ‘emotional support’ they received.

- More frequent parenting inputs have more positive associations, on the whole ...
  e.g. Fewer problems + higher achievement at school; less smoking and drinking; less reporting of indicators of mental ill-health.

  ... but there are nuances
  e.g. Higher life satisfaction more often reported by young people also scoring only medium levels of inputs for supervision or educational support.
Parenting behaviours – sometimes less is more

% of young people with high life satisfaction
(overall % = 82%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of parenting behaviours</th>
<th>Emotional</th>
<th>Educational</th>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Supervisory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low (0 to 6)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (7 to 11)</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (12)</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Parenting behaviours – age matters

**During the last year how often did your parents, or the adults you live with …**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>12-13-YEAR-OLDS</th>
<th>14-15-YEAR-OLDS</th>
<th>% change often / always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUPERVISION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… ask you where you were going when you went out</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PHYSICAL CARE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… make sure you saw a doctor when you needed one</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EMOTIONAL SUPPORT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… support you if you were upset</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… keep track of how you were doing at school</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thresholds for neglect

Scores for experiences of parenting ...
- Emotional support
- Educational support
- Physical care
- Supervision

Linked to ...

- Risk-taking behaviours
  - ‘Do you ever smoke cigarettes?’

- Psychological health
  - Problems with sleeping / feeling depressed

- School
  - In the last three months have you missed school without permission?

- Subjective well-being
  - Huebner life satisfaction
    (five item scale e.g. ‘My life is just right’)
  - ‘Relatedness’
    (four item scale e.g. ‘People in my life care about me’)

The Children’s Society
11 January 2016
Adolescent neglect – scores/thresholds ... and % of young people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenting type</th>
<th>Cared for</th>
<th>At risk</th>
<th>Neglected</th>
<th>% of 14-15-yr-olds neglected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EMOTIONAL SUPPORT</td>
<td>7 – 12</td>
<td>5 – 6</td>
<td>0 – 4</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT</td>
<td>7 – 12</td>
<td>5 – 6</td>
<td>0 – 4</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL CARE</td>
<td>8 – 12</td>
<td>6 – 7</td>
<td>0 – 5</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPERVISION</td>
<td>7 – 12</td>
<td>0 – 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Behaviours of neglected adolescents

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT: Differences in behaviour of cared for and neglected young people

- **Got really drunk in the past few months**
  - Cared for (score 7-12): 22%
  - Neglected (0-4): 46%

- **Ever smoked**
  - Cared for (score 7-12): 12%
  - Neglected (0-4): 29%

- **Truanted once or more in the past 3 months**
  - Cared for (score 7-12): 13%
  - Neglected (0-4): 27%
Health of neglected adolescents

Differences in self-reported health of cared for and neglected young people

- Educational support: 3% (Cared for) vs. 28% (Neglected)
- Emotional support: 3% (Cared for) vs. 11% (Neglected)
- Physical care: 4% (Cared for) vs. 21% (Neglected)

% of young people who said their health was 'bad' / 'very bad'

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### Summary of some overall findings

**14-15-year-olds**

| Young people are more supported in some ways than in others | - Almost half reported full scores for ‘physical care’ and ‘supervision’  
| | - Less than 1/3 reported full scores for ‘educational’ or ‘emotional support’ |
| Context makes a difference | - Boys are less supervised than girls  
| | - Material deprivation underpins much neglect (n.b. young person’s self-report scale) |
| Many young people are neglected | - Overall, around one in seven (15%) of young people reported one or more type of neglect |
| Neglected teenagers do worse | - Less parenting inputs (mostly) = poorer ‘outcomes’ e.g. smoking / drinking, education, health  
| | - Importance of ‘emotional support’ (life satisfaction) |
Adolescent neglect: what this study adds


- More neutral measurement of neglect – linking young people’s reports of parenting inputs to their responses on other aspects of their lives. (Neglect not pre-determined / ‘framed’ prior to participant responses).

- Covers one key aspect of what ‘adolescent neglect’ means – parenting deficits.
## Adolescent neglect

### What next?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measuring neglect</th>
<th>Defining neglect</th>
<th>Exploring contexts / outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ The measure worked well.</td>
<td>▪ Further work around conceptualising neglect.</td>
<td>▪ Multi-perspective case studies with families and professionals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ First use – needs refinement / maybe some extension.</td>
<td>▪ More consultation with young people / parents / professionals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ More surveys – inc. targeted samples.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES (and links to online publications)


Understanding Adolescent Neglect

✉ Phil.Raws@childrenssociety.org.uk