Hearing Young Voices

City Hall Conference - 30th January 2019
Dr Alan Cooklin
Parental mental illness – a timeline

• **1966** – Dr, later Professor, now Sir Michael Rutter: Monograph - Children of parents with mental illness improve resilience if helped to appraise their situation

• **1993** – 1st Study of Young Carers by Aldridge and Becker, identified **146,000** for all parental illness

• **2008** – SCIE Research Briefing estimated **2,000,000** children living with a parent with mental illness
Parental mental illness – a timeline

• **2011** – National Census still identified only **166,000** Young Carers for all parental illness

• **2018** – Ernst & Young report commissioned by Our Time estimated **3.4 million children** living with parent with mental Illness, and that failure to intervene would cost at least **£33 billion** (Sources available separately)

• **2018** – Report of the ‘Toxic Trio’ survey by The Children’s Commissioner increases the likely prevalence of children affected by severe and moderate mental illness to **3.7 million children** from 0-17 years of age
Mental health and social impacts

- Much variation in what adverse effects in children measured in research

- **1996** – Rubovits reported *70% of children* suffered at least moderate mental health problems or other disruptions based on aggregated data

- Mowbray et al (2004) estimated that one third of all children were using mental health services, but not accounted for ‘hidden’ children or loss of attainment.
Mental health and social impacts

• Many researchers such as Manning and Gregoire (2009) highlighted loss or attainment in school and lowered life opportunities.

• Keshaven et al. (2008) identified 60% of children as having one or more ‘lifetime’ significant psychiatric diagnoses.

• Many researchers (such as Reupert 2013) have stressed that diagnosis is not a predictor of the impact on children – rather function and chronicity.
What is the impact?

- All the impacts identified repeatedly for young carers:
  - Lost school time
  - Attainment and life chances
  - Depression
  - Social isolation
  - Stigma and bullying
What is the impact?

• In addition specific impacts on the child’s mental and emotional development – depending on child’s age at onset and chronicity:
  • Fears of following or ‘catching’ the parent’s illness
  • Being invaded by or adopting the ill parent’s perceptions and ‘world view’
  • Self doubt about child’s own emotions and perceptions
  • Disorders of attachment
  • Self blame
What can we all do?

• Very small investment of time and money can make huge difference - possibly the most economic of all the 10 Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in terms of prevention

• Repeated surveys by young people have identified the most significant factors for improving resilience as:

  • Having a good explanation of the illness and understanding of what is happening

  • An adult who can be a mentor or advocate

  • Lowering social isolation by meeting a group of children with similar experiences.
What can we all do?

• Our Time offers these elements through the KidsTime Workshops for affected families and in schools through the ‘Who Cares?’ programme.

• Hear from some young people about the impact
References


Ernst & Young, ( 2018) ‘Sizing the Problem’ – Prevalence re-analysis commissioned by Our Time

References Contd.


Manning C., Gregoire A, 2009 Effects of parental mental illness on children. Psychiatry Volume 8, Issue I, Pages 7- 9


