Parental mental health & impact on children & young people

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#BeingSeenAndHeard
Helping young people affected by parental mental illness
1 in 8 children & young people
Significant family factors

Multiply by 5
‘The rates of child mental health tended to be highest in children living with a parent with poor mental health’

(DH, 2018)
Being a parent

- Parenting is a significant factor in child development (Belsky & DE Haan, 2011; Steele & Steele, 2008)

- Parents experience greater highs & deeper lows compared to adults who are not parents (Nelson et al, 2014)

- Parental mental health difficulties can test parents’ capacity to provide their children with warm, nurturant & consistent parenting (O’Connor & Scott, 2007; Macfie, 2009; Reinelt et al, 2014)
  - 25% of adult mental health service users with significant interpersonal/personality difficulties are parents.
  - 63% of women with psychosis in the UK are mothers
  - 25% of adults in acute psychiatric hospital settings may be parents, probably under-estimate.
Parental mental health: *Risk & resilience*

- Increases the *possibility* of childhood mental health difficulties & safeguarding concerns. (Dutton, Denny-Keys, & Sells, 2011; Stepp et al., 2011; Newman et al., 2007)

- Better understanding and recognition of personal, family & social factors that promote children’s developmental outcomes when parents’ are affected by mental health difficulties (Anda, 2006; Balaji et al., 2007; Barrett & Fleming, 2011; Sameroff & Rosenblum, 2006)
The voices of parents: Their parenting experience (Day et al 2019; Wilson et al., 2018)

“...most of my mental health problems come from being badly parented, like 90%... that’s been my big problem. That’s why...I avoided having a child...for 20 years. Even though I desperately wanted to have a child and a partner and a happy family, I just kept choosing really inappropriate partners and, but I knew I would never have children with them because I was scared I was going to turn into my mum”

“The way that I parent, the way that she gets angry, the way I react to her, the way I can’t do boundaries and I'm not consistent, the way I don't have rules, the way there's no discipline, she talks to me like rubbish, she hits me and things like that...”

“At the time, the depression was quite hard on me.....I was at a point where I was actually slitting my wrists. I wanted to die and I was going through it myself. I didn’t see a point in living so it was very hard for me to parent (my child) as well as keep myself at a certain point.”
Mental health service users as parents: *The invisible family*


- **Recovery reviews** (e.g. Bonney & Stickley 2008; Leamy et al. 2011; Maybery et al., 2013; Tew et al. 2012)
  - Few references to parenting role and responsibilities of parents with severe mental health difficulties

- Despite high need and transgenerational poor outcomes, under researched and evidenced area
  - 26 RCT for depressed parents, only 3 RCT for parents/children of parents with other severe mental health difficulties (Bee et al, 2014)
  - Parenting interventions for parents affected by severe mental health difficulties with child 1yr+, only 18 studies (4 RCTS), only 2 not rated low quality (Schrank et al., 2015)
Service & Practitioner Challenges: ‘Families falling between gaps’

- **AWARENESS & RECOGNITION OF NEED**
  - Holistic understanding of parent mental health, parenting & child needs
  - E.g. Parental status under-recognised and recorded in adult mental health services

- **ACCEPTABLILITY OF SUPPORT AND INTERVENTION**
  - Parents fear child protection processes if their mental health problems and parenting challenges are known to services

- **IMPACT ON PARENT, CHILD & FAMILY OUTCOMES**
  - Narrow focus on safeguarding rather than impact of mental health adults problems on parenting, family resilience & child wellbeing
  - Parents sceptical that services can/will help with broader parenting issues

*Day et al., (2018), Parker et al., (2008)*
The voices of parents: Experience of services (Day et al 2019; Wilson et al., 2018)

“They were trying to say, ‘oh it’s down to your parenting, you were this, you were that, oh well you got, you know personality disorder, you got ADHD you know, blah di blah, oh it’s you that has given it to him’... I felt like they were blaming me.”

“You start believing that things aren’t going to be any different,... it’s like, same old, same old...”

“Part of the problem of accessing support for (my daughter) is that, you know, well ‘Mum is hysterical and prone to exaggerate and, you know, catastrophising and all of that’...”
The voices of parents: 
*Hopes & commitment* 
*(Day et al 2019; Wilson et al., 2018)*

“Because I wanted to improve my parenting skills and my confidence, I was worrying about my son, and I worry about the impact of my own illness on my children. So, I was interested to see how I could improve relationships between me and my children. And how to parent them better.”

“I needed help because the feelings I had at the time was strong. I wouldn’t say hate but a strong dislike and I felt sad because she’s my child and no parent should feel like that. So, I was quite happy that I was going to get some help and in turn that helped me.”

“I really wanted the help actually, so I was actually really hoping I would be in the parenting group (HFP Intervention)...to get some help and how to be able to work with him (her son) and his behaviours also alongside my issues as well. So yeah, I was really up for it,”
Effective stepped care pathways not ‘Falling through the gaps’

- Recognise need
- Improve awareness
- Parents’ hopes
- Better acceptability
- Greater Impact

**Intensive intervention** for parents & families whose difficulties are having a significant impact on child development & outcomes

**Individual/group prevention/early intervention** to promote positive parenting for at risk parents, children & families

**Better assessment and recognition** for all parents, children & families
- Effective, evidence-based advice & guidance

FAMILIES WITH MENTAL HEALTH DIFFICULTIES