

NEIGHBOURHOOD ENABLING TEAM (NET)

**Care Planning for Children - Risk
Assessments and Packages of
Support Arising from Problem
Parental Drug Use**



The Neighbourhood Enabling Team (NET)

- NRF funded Family Support Team (2003 - 2006)
- Locality based, multi-disciplinary family support service
- To meet the needs of vulnerable children, young people and their families
- Aims of the project:
 - Early intervention and preventative work to reduce the number of children looked after and the number of children on the child protection register
 - Close working relationships with partner agencies

Project Evaluation

20 April 2005

- Evaluation of 18 month period
- Snapshot of family support work in Middlesbrough
- Good practice identified (Event 12.09.05)
- Some trends identified:
 - Increase of work within substance misusing parents
 - Multiple problems
 - Increase of referrals under the Primary Pregnancy Protocol
 - Team took over 1/4 of all these referrals

Prevalence & Type of Referral

- The Findings were significant because:
 - The Team covers a small geographical area
 - The nature of the referrals
 - Some of the most chronic problematic drug users
 - Outcomes for many of these families
 - Adoptions or long-term care with extended family members

Risk Assessments & Packages of Support

Work in the Team led to the development of a model of practice.

Family Support

The intensity of this process highlighted the need to support the parents around treatment and assessment.

Hidden Harm

- Practice in the Team reflects some of the key findings and recommendations of the Hidden Harm Report
 - Parental problem drug use can and does cause serious harm to children at any age from conception to adulthood
 - Reducing harm to children from parental drug use should become a main feature of policy and practice
 - By working together, services can take many practical steps to protect and improve the health and well-being of affected children

Recommendations for a Multi Disciplinary Service

- To be developed - incorporating Adult Services and specialist professionals across Health and Children, Families & Learning
 - To offer a comprehensive assessment, drug treatment and family support package to parents with problematic drug use where there is a likelihood of the baby / child(ren) being removed

Aims

To enable parent(s) with significant problematic drug use to make and sustain the necessary changes to care for their children

Practice

- The model of practice developed in the NET Team should be progressed
- To include work across agencies and robustly co-ordinated in line with good practice and established protocols
- Such a model of working is innovative, combining research led practice, theories and models of good practice that is evidence based

Issues for Middlesbrough

- Middlesbrough has a significant drug problem and this has both short and long term policy and service implications
- A small pilot family support project in central Middlesbrough identified high levels of substance misusing parents, significantly it also identified a higher than expected number of unborn / new-borns being born into chaotic drug misusing households

Outcomes for Children

- Parental problem drug use can and often does compromise children's health and development from conception through to adulthood
- Such an initiative would support and demonstrate good practice and outcomes for some of our most vulnerable children to be given a realistic and protected opportunity to be cared for by their birth parents

'Very often families feel that there is no point trying, that things have gone too far, that they are not capable of making things better or that they are just not worth the effort. Feeling hopeless, pointless and worthless, some are just waiting to lose their children, already grieving before the act.'

Taken from: 'Drink and Drugs News'
10 January 2005