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Maslow's Hierarchy – a reminder



Young people with complex needs – some observations

- Often have multiple needs – but common histories – complex experiences of trauma (ACES); attachment disruption; parental substance misuse and/or mental health problems; instability
- Difficulties become more apparent in adolescence as they intensify or become less tolerated
- The complex issues affecting the young person get reduced to a single label, such as ADHD;ASC; vulnerable
- Young people get passed within and between systems – with nobody taking responsibility

Alfie– a case study (or how not to do it)

- Aged 8. Lives at home with mum and 4 siblings (6 children in total – two grown up)
- History of alcohol abuse and DV. Sporadic contact with dad. Alfie says he would like to see dad more
- Financial difficulties – mortgage arrears. Threat of eviction.
- Mum works full time.
- Alfie often appears unhappy and/or angry. Says mum shouts all the time
- Alfie is academically able and has generally good relationships with peers. He is challenging with adults. His behaviour deteriorated markedly 6 months ago

Alfie – a case study. What did we do?

- Family support worker?
- Paediatrician?
- School ?

- What was offered was a series of simplistic interventions, delivered in a piecemeal manner without addressing the systemic context.
- Unintended consequence – original needs are reinforced, leading to a deterioration in mental wellbeing and increasing the likelihood of engagement in risky behaviours

So, what should we do?

Fundamentally, we need to change the question from:

“What is wrong with him?”

To:

“What has happened to him?”

Trauma

- Adverse early experiences such as unstable caregiving, deprivation of love or nutrition, neglect or maltreatment, disrupted attachment (W.H.O. 2014)... **chronic**
- May also relate to incidents that are unintentional or unrelated to abuse or neglect such as the death of a relative, transitions, family breakdowns or illness (O'Connor and Russell, 2004)... **acute**

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

- Physical, verbal or sexual abuse
- Parental separation
- Domestic violence
- Mental illness
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Imprisonment of a close family
- Homelessness

Consequences of adverse early life experiences

- Learning difficulties
- Language delay
- Hyperactivity/disruptive behaviour
- Distractibility
- Hyper vigilance
- Poor impulse control
- Self harming



So what are educational psychologists going to do about ACES?

- Developed a training programme with the aim of ensuring that every school in Birmingham is Trauma Informed and Attachment Aware
- Helping schools to implement low cost/no cost interventions that are shown to change the balance from vulnerability towards resilience (e.g. meet and greet; letting children know they are “kept in mind”; good transitions; active listening)
- Working as part of a multi agency community of practice across the West Midlands
- Working with the Children’s Trust to develop a range of evidence based interventions to support parents and carers
- Developing a trauma informed model behaviour policy for Birmingham schools

Questions?

