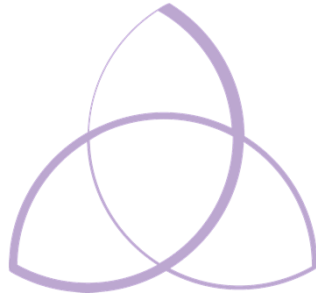


**Anna Freud Centre**

Emotional Neglect, System Failure,  
and the Early Years Parenting Unit

**Duncan McLean**  
**Minna Daum**



**Emotional Neglect**



**What children need emotionally**

- Affection
- Measured admiration
- Mirroring
- Containment -- especially negative affects
- Boundaries
- Mind Mindedness

**Difficult to evaluate, but when lacking equally damaging as trauma**

- Poor self esteem
- Lack of trust
- Poor impulse control
- Poor affect recognition / affect management
- Lack of agency/responsibility

**System Failure**



**Social Workers often recognise emotional neglect**

**Unable to evaluate -- leads to neglect**

**Referral to other services -- failure to engage**

**Lack of authority in system -- further neglect**

**Hopelessness in social care -- delay and repetitive referrals**

**Early Years Parenting Unit 1**



**DfE-funded 3 Day programme -- 2 full days for family**

**Parent(s) have personality difficulties**

**Child(ren) under 5 subject to Child in Need or Child Protection plans**

**Joint working with social care throughout**

**No confidentiality barrier**

**Shared concerns and consequences**

**Mentalization based programme**

In family

In system -- therapists and social workers

### Early Years Parenting Unit 2



Day Programme:

Multifamily work

Video work

Play

Adult groups a) Parenting focus b) Adult personality difficulties

Addresses:

Parenting problems

Adult pathology

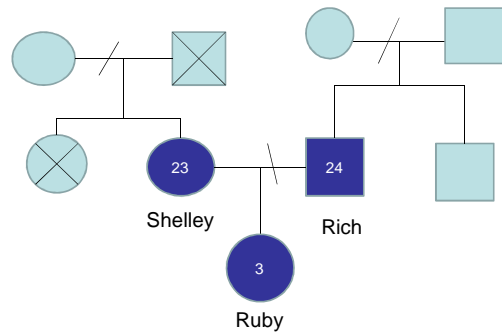
Child development

Aims:

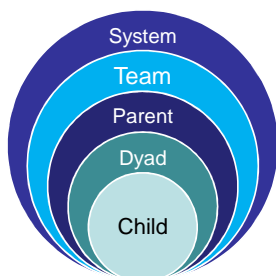
Faster resolution

Development of adequate parenting

### Shelley and Ruby



### Interventions in neglect: integrated thinking



### Holding the parent in mind



- **Engagement:** don't let the parent disappear
- **Individual:** attend to negative affects
- **MBT group:** relationships with other parents
- **Parenting group:** impact of self-neglect on capacity to care, importance/experience of play

#### Working with the child: developmental help

- **Give the child an experience of emotional attunement**
- **Give the child an experience of becoming an agent in her own interactions**
- **Raise the child's expectations that adult will keep her in mind**

## Parent – child work



### **Drawing the line:**

- Keep risk at the forefront
- Do not ignore unacceptable behaviour

### **Arousing curiosity in the mother's mind about her child:**

- Framework for practising attuned care
- Video feedback