



Welfare Conditionality

SANCTIONS, SUPPORT AND
BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Can you 'make' families change their behaviour?

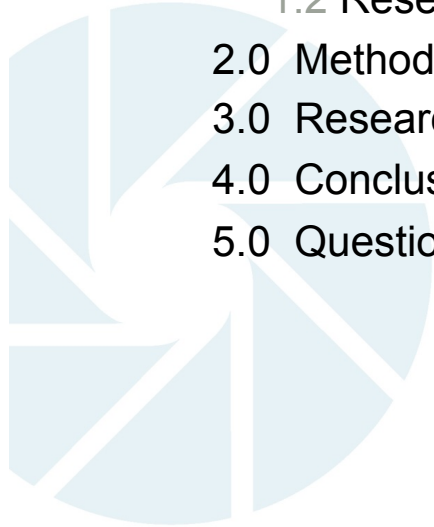
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1.0

Introduction to the research

Policy context

Long history of problem family

- 1940s Pacifist Service Units/Family Service Units
- New Labour Respect Agenda and Family Intervention Projects
- Troubled Families Programme
 - Based on 120,000 plus 'troubled' families
 - Key worker approach

Research questions

- What is the social and political context and conditions in which families labelled as troubled are conceptualised as being problematic?
- **How are behaviour change mechanisms constructed and enacted in practice by professionals and what are the outcomes of intensive interventions?**
- How do families with problems experience intensive interventions and make sense of their own behaviour and behaviour change?
- **What are the ethical normative and policy implications of families subject to family based intensive interventions?**

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2.0 Methodology

Methodology

- **Qualitative and longitudinal study**
- Track 10 families over a number of months
- Monthly interviews with family (and key worker)
- Attending parenting course and training
- Interviews with parents
- Interviews with parenting volunteers
- Interviews with practitioners

Interviews with families

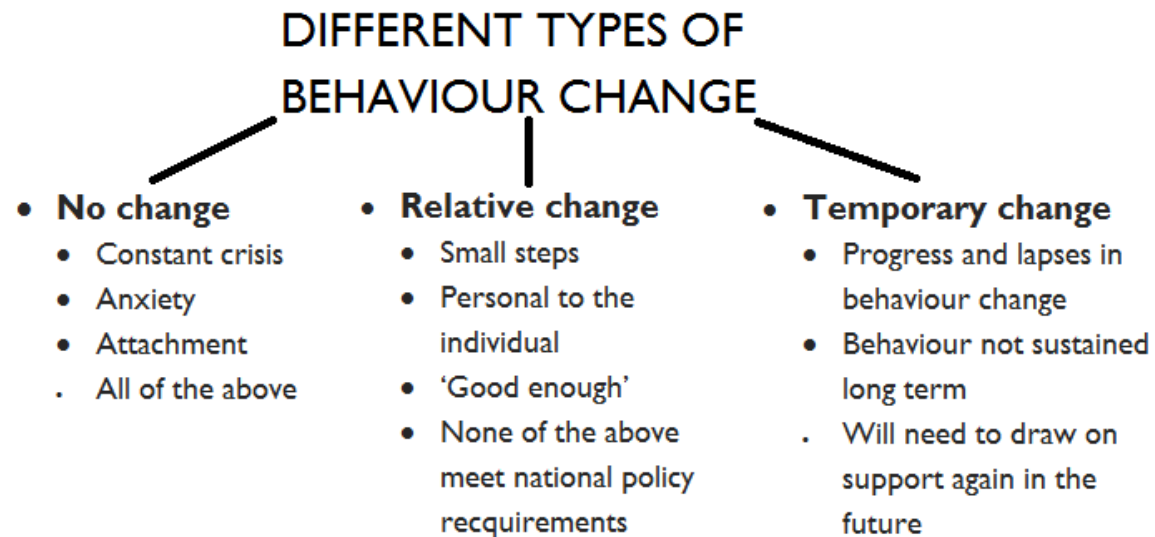
Family	Int 1	Int 2	Int 3	Int 4	Int 5	Int 6	Int 7
1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
4	x	x	x	x			
5	x	x	x	x	x	x	
6	x						
7	x	x	x	x	x		
8	x	x	x	x	x		
9	x	x	x	x			
10	x	x	x	x			

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3.0 Research findings and discussion

The messiness of behaviour change



No change

"Part of what I should be doing or what I should achieve with people is encouraging and motivating people to actually start taking some control back themselves...I don't think that applies to Carla I think it is more of a panic and she just can't face it I think she completely cuts herself away from things, buries her head in the sand. The long term cases are not supposed to take more than twenty hours I have totted up about one hundred and fifteen hours already, and that is not really taking into account the phone calls and the letters and everything else so it has caused a bit of friction...she has never not had someone there doing things for her, picking up the pieces when she's forgotten, or failed to do things herself...it is frustrating when you don't see any progress cos all you want is for someone's life to improve, even if it is just small measures and every time you got a step forward it wasn't long before you were going straight back to square one again" (Key worker, voluntary organisation, family 1)

Relative change/'distance travelled'

"We came back from Manchester and I lost all my cards, everything, on the coach or on the train, I thought I will ring up and to be honest I knew I wouldn't get it back anyway I knew I had lost the cards especially over there and I thought I would ring up on the off chance and they weren't and we come back so I weren't able to pay the bills when I got back cos I had no cards or ought so as soon as I got back Amy didn't even know, I went on the phone rang them all up and sorted everything and Nick went bloody hell you can do it can't you and I went you know what I can cos Amy has given me the confidence, before it was can you do this please can you do that please, or I would just like ignore it...my problem was what do I say then Amy used to be like, tell them whatever you know even if you don't understand and how much do you have to pay, ask them what you need to do, ask them they are not going to think you are stupid" (Sophie, Family 4)

Relative change/'distance travelled'

"This moment in time I have minimal concerns because their money issues are better than I thought they would be at this point, they are managing better than I thought and I feel we have taken them as far as they are capable of going at this point, so although there are things that could be better, we are not going to be able to take them any further at this point, they might be able to make improvements in the future but right now they are at their capacity to change" (Key worker, Family 4)

Temporary change

"What has always been said about Annie and Craig is that they do not maintain the interventions what they learn, they are quite capable of carrying them out but they do not maintain and it always goes back, and this is why they seem to get social care back all the time, what I have said to Annie and Craig is that this time we are aiming to maintain things. I have pointed out to the family that in the past the house has been very very dirty even though they do do the cleaning, this is the time to try and keep on top of it and with bedtimes...you are constantly challenging, and challenging and challenging and it becomes draining." (Key worker, family intervention project, family 3)

The relationship between families and practitioners

- All support is authoritarian?
- All support is unwelcome and bad?
- Families have no power/agency?

Authoritarian roles and family agency

- **Practitioners are the inspector**
 - Feeling 'watched in the core unit'
 - Practitioners did 'judge'
- **Families benefitted from support**
 - Families want support and to engage
 - *"That is why we have come here, which is what we tried to say at that CAMHs meeting, the reason why we left, the reason why things have probably got so out of hand" (Andrew, family 7)*
 - **No evidence of 'sticks' but compromise**
 - **Families could resist**

Limits to tolerance

"Poverty, deprivation, that is the world I grew up in so I am used to that, but the lack of care, lack of parenting that is worse. Poverty is a problem but, it is the poverty along with a lack of nurturing and a lack of care and the sheer brutality of the lack of concern and care and love. You do make a judgement on whether that is not good enough or that is not acceptable for that child and I do really try to understand how this person or parent got into that situation but sometimes you do just go that is horrific that is not right and you are wrong as a parent, cos sometimes you have to go whatever your experiences are as a parent, you have a responsibility and you failed, I can't also keep going your life has led to this, I have to go it has to stop and your reasons for it, you had the opportunity and you didn't take it, so whatever your reasons they have become excuses, because you didn't change them and you had that opportunity so it doesn't wash anymore" (Key worker, HS, family 4)

Balance of power

"The core unit is a delicate ecosystem, we need them and they need us. Although ultimately we control whether they get put forward for priority or not, we are paid to deliver a certain modicum of support and without signatures and without them engaging with us and working with us we can't do that, we could write on our contact notes that we have phoned this place, but if they don't sign our key work plan and if they don't sign our support plans it might as well not have happened" (Key worker 8, Housing Association)

Tolerance of ASB

"It is like if I put a line outside and put clothes on it I would have to sit and watch my clothes cos they would thieve them, if I try and have a sleep in the afternoon I can't cos they have got no manners, make noise and everything, I am not used to that life I like a nice, peaceful in and out, do what I want to do in life, I can't be doing with all this noise and all that...kids on here, disrespectful got no manners got no respect, swear at you, spit on you...you know that newsagents on here...a few weeks ago they were spitting on him and calling him tramp and all that, so he has chased them and he has got to this wall here they have climbed up the wall to get into flats he has climbed over it he is sixty one year old what if he would have fell, so I was disgusted me so I thought fuck that so day after I went into the office and told them, that were going in his shop and spitting on him kicking his shutters, calling him tramp" (Louise, Family 9)

Resistance

"I want to bang their heads together, they don't answer the phone, they don't plan properly, they leave a full fridge and freezer worth of food, which upsets me for them so much because they can't afford to do that, they go away for a week, and that is not a problem, it is when it turns into more than a week and I think you are not contacting me I don't know what is going on, the children are not going to school and nursery, what are you doing? We have been through that again and again and again, when you go away please stay contactable with me" (Key worker, housing organisation)

Power and space

- Delivery of support in the home
- Clinical sites
- Free to leave?

"She said you know you've wasted five minutes of my life I will never get back now because you are in my living room and I could feel in myself thinking, oh next time I hope she is not in. You are human too and you are not always going to get it right, it was hairy..." (Manager, substance misuse organisation)

Families can monitor practitioners too

- Practitioners need to feel accepted by families too

"She said 'oh I hope she didn't say I was crap!' She said she did actually, she said you hadn't done anything for her, and [key worker] said 'oh you have to get used to this don't you,' I thought watch [key worker's] face, she went back to her desk she sat down, she went like that, you could see her thinking why would she say that, you could see her thinking, working out all the things she had probably done with this family" (Parenting practitioner)

Practitioners can disrupt the delivery of government policy

- The family engage well with the key worker and the actions they have been asked
- On the two visits made (one unannounced) the children had all been given breakfast and cleaned, the family are establishing a routine and improvements have been made in the home
- The key worker has stated that both the parents are honest about the situation at home and that the parents have a good relationship and support each other with the children
- **The key worker had been clear that the noise is due to having 5 children**, and the parents were keeping the children in one room, which was making the noise louder.

Ethical dilemmas

"People have had awful lives and you know they are crying and they are desperate to do something different but they just can't at that moment, it is not the right time and that is hard for us to support the decision cos it is the right thing to do and to support the family, it is the right thing to do but it doesn't mean I think you are a bad person and you really feel for a person you are still a human being who are doing the best they had" (Manager, substance misuse organisation)

- 'Torn loyalties' and emotion

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4.0 Conclusions

Conclusions

- Behaviour change can be slow, messy, uncertain and temporary
- Families are empowered and disempowered in their relationship with practitioners
- Power is not totalised
- Families can resist effectively
- Practitioners can disrupt delivery of government policy
- Need a more nuanced debate about power and family interventions

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5.0 Questions?



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