

What is a parental capacity assessment?

[Society](#), [Child Abuse](#)



Manning et al., (2009) claim that one in 11 children aged less than 16 in the UK are living in a family where there is an alcohol or drug problem. However it is important to note that not all parents who are substance misusers are bad parents, but the habit can affect their parenting capacity (Murphy et al., 2003). Children who live with parents who are substance misusers are at risk of losing the attachment, bonding, and normal family relationships.

Research suggests that parental substance misuse (PSM) increases the risk of physical and emotional neglect; behavioural and mental health in young people; poor school performance and academic attainment. Forrester et al. (2009) suggest around half of the children born to substance misusers in treatment are in local authority care, adopted or living with another family member. Barnard et al., (2004) argue that parents who use drugs intensely, their children's basic needs are more likely to be neglected.

According to Brandon et al., (2012) both substance misuse and psychopathology play a significant role in the abuse and neglect of children. Research findings suggest that history of intimate partner abuse/violence and substance misuses are associated with parenting behaviour which can cause abuse and neglect of children. Brandon et al review for 2009-2011 found that (PSM) was blamed for 42% of all serious cases involving a child's death or injury.

The number of children who received support from children's services in England in 2017 was over 390, 000 (Department for Education 2017). Brandon et al., (2012) claims that children who die from abuse and neglect each year is estimated around 100. Parental substance abuse (PSM) can affect the

behaviour and parenting skills for the adult person. Research findings suggest that the impact of parental substance abuse on children and young people is influenced by the chronological age, stage of development and the extent of vulnerability.

Albert Bandura's Social learning theory agrees with the behaviourist learning theories of (classical conditioning and operant conditioning) by suggesting that behaviour is learnt from the environment through the process of observational learning. Bandura (1986) argues that in society children are surrounded by influential models like parents; peer group; teachers; media characters who they observe and imitate. The author claims that reinforcement can be positive or negative but it usually leads to a change in the person's behaviour. Basing from Bandura's Social learning theory, parents who are substance misusers are bad role models because this will negatively reinforce their children.

The role of Serious Case Reviews (SCR) is to learn from the experience and prevent the same incidents from happening. The (SCR) of the deaths of innocent children clearly shows the interrelationship between domestic violence, mental ill health and substance misuse 'toxic trio' (Brandon et al., 2012). According to Laslett et al., (2014) children in families where the parents have dual diagnosis of mental health and drug misuse, the risk of repeated maltreatment on young people is greater than among families where there is evidence of mental health problems or other drug use alone.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 has made changes that promote the welfare of children. Some of the changes include introduction of local

safeguarding partners; national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel; Child Review Partners; Local Safeguarding Partners; National and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

Information sharing on safeguarding children has been made possible by the introduction of Multi-agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) which are comprised of a team of co-located professionals who work together to provide what they call "the bigger picture". The above approach is set to improve the safeguarding of children that are living in families affected by PSM. Research suggests that different types of alcohol misuse are linked to different mental states and parenting behaviours.

Houmoller et al, (2011) argue that Parental Substance Misuse (PSM) affects child development, both short and long term. The authors reiterate that the problem of (PSM) erodes self-esteem; self-worth and confidence in children and young people. For example, children can display a range of psychosomatic responses like stomach aches, headaches, bed wetting and sleep problems when they live with (PSM) parents. One million children are believed to be living with a parent who has an 'alcohol problem' Forrester (2012).