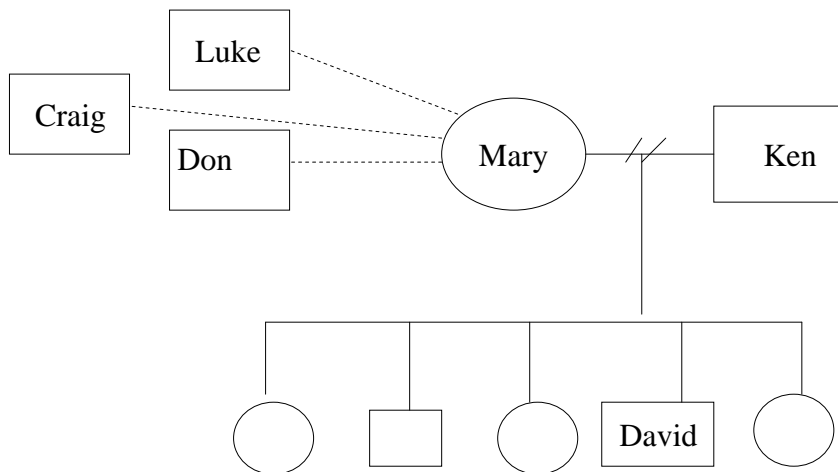


Working with vulnerable families with multiple and complex needs

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Mary's genogram

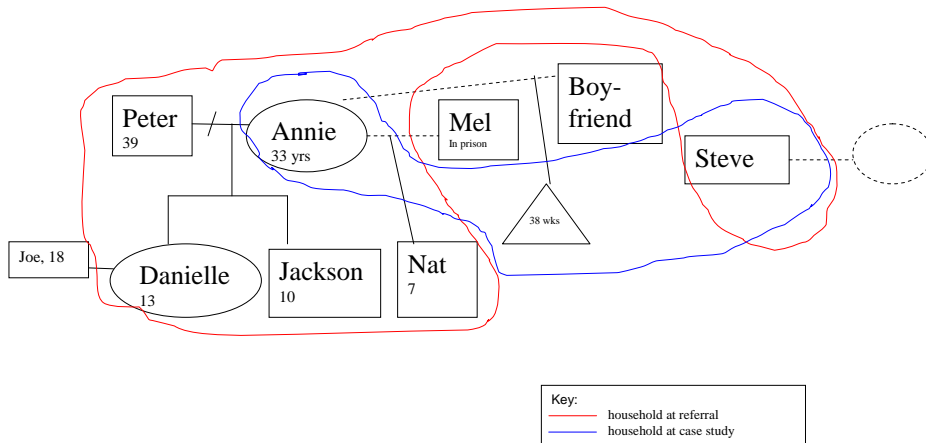
SEFS family categories

- Category 1: Mild parenting difficulties, strength and competency
- Category 2: Families in crisis
- Category 3: Families with several problems. Cumulative effect on parenting over time
- Category 4: Seriously complex, troubled and excluded families

“Excluded families”- a term used by Tierney (1976) to describe a particular group of clients in child welfare.

See Tierney, Leonard, “Excluded families”, Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1976.

Annie's and Peter's genogram



SEFS family categories

- Category 1: Mild parenting difficulties, strength and competency
- Category 2: Families in crisis
- Category 3: Families with several problems. Cumulative effect on parenting over time
- Category 4: Seriously complex, troubled and excluded families

Findings

- Complexity was a feature of families who required more than one-off or group only service
- SEFS saw many more families at the complex end of the spectrum of family difficulty than originally anticipated

Excluded families – special case with identifiable features (1)

- Multiple problems
- Serious, entrenched and chronic problems, persisting across generations
- Intergenerational contact with Child Protection
- Multiple notifications and re-notifications to Child Protection

Features of excluded families (2)

- Severe effects in individual development
- Complex family structures and processes
- Serious problems with the environment
- Life focussed on survival

Features of excluded families (3)

- Excluded from mainstream community life
- Past interventions from the service system have failed
- Identifiable processes of exclusion: poverty, social isolation and educational disadvantage

Findings (cont'd)

In the eight case studies

- Goals set were achieved
- Environments of the families were changed
- Reduction of number and severity of problems in the families

Outcomes with the eight case

- Changed parenting (all cases)
- Increased well-being of children (all cases)
- Improved safety of the children (six of six cases where it was problematic)

Outcomes with the eight case

- Improved school achievement (all cases)
- Changed parents' employment or preparation for employment (six of six cases where it was problematic)
- Reduced social isolation (all cases)



The importance of the worker-client relationship

- high levels of professionalism
- tailored to the particular needs of each family
- a personal and compassionate approach
- in the face of very difficult client behaviour and extremely difficult family situations

Essential Practice with excluded families

- Strengthened casework
- Strengthened clinical skills
- Co-work with specialist services
- (Increased salaries for direct practice staff)

Program Level

Essential program components for excluded families

- Strengthened casework
- Increased salaries and career structure for direct practice staff
- Continuity of worker
- Programs to reduce social isolation
- (Build social networks)

Essential program components for excluded families (2)

- Community development designed for the excluded
- Specifically targeted child development programs
- Education programs – for children and parents
- Specialist employment services

Essential program components for excluded families (3)

- Specialist services for men
- More intensive services
- Services provided for a longer time
- Further development of service system collaboration

Essential Social Policy for excluded families

- Reduce long term unemployment
- Reduce poverty
- Eradicate homelessness
- Tackle educational disadvantage in parents and children

Essential Social Policy for excluded families

- Early intervention and prevention targeted to excluded families
- Don't forget early intervention and prevention services generally

Mitchell, Gaye. "Comprehending complexity, fighting exclusion: Evaluation of South East Family Services: Executive Summary and Summary Report." Melbourne: Connections UnitingCare, 2008

Mitchell, Gaye, Cathie Hutchinson, Jo Smart, and Julie Wassle. *Comprehending complexity, fighting exclusion: Evaluation of South East Family Services: Detailed Report*. Connections UnitingCare, 2008.

Both available from <http://www.connections.org.au>
Follow links to "Publications" and then to "research publications".

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material to the
presenters as you leave
(We'll stand at the
doors)



