The Smith Institute

THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Early Intervention: Good Parents, Great Kids, Better Citizens

The statistics

Current situation:

- The recent UNICEF study of child wellbeing ranked the UK bottom of the 21 countries evaluated [1]
- UK rates of child abuse are three times the average of Norway, Sweden and Denmark [2]

Problems:

- Violent crime is on the rise: violent offences in England and Wales were 25 times higher in 2003 than in 1950 [3]
- The number of children murdering other children has tripled in the last three years[4]
- Infants under the age of one have a greater risk of being killed by another person than at any other age under 18 in England and Wales [5]
- Only eight per cent of children in care obtain five GCSEs grade C or higher and only one per cent progress to higher education[6]
- The 20 per cent of young people who fail to get any GCSEs come from just 203 schools, these are mostly located within two miles of a large deprived social housing estate [7]
- Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are five times more likely to fail academically than their peers [8]
- Children's alcohol consumption has doubled in the past 15 years and accelerated most rapidly among 11-13 year olds[9]
- Over 50 per cent of 15 year olds in England and Wales drink on a weekly basis. This compares with 17 per cent in France, Portugal and US [10]

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[1] UNICEF, *An Overview of Child Wellbeing in Rich Countries*, 2007
[2] World Health Organisation Statistics, 2003, Geneva: WHO
[3] WAVE Trust, *Violence and what to do about it*, 2005
[4] Research by '*Dispatches'* for Channel 4, cited in Daily Telegraph, Friday 18 Apriul 2008 – accessed at - http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1576698/Youth-gangs-triple-child-murder-rate.html
[5] Povey D et al, *Homicides, firearms offences and intimate violence 2006/07*: supplementary volume 2 to *Crime in England and Wales 2006/07*, London: Home Office
[6] Speech by Baroness Walmsley, House of Lords debate, 2004
[7] Social Exclusion Unit, *BRIDGING THE GAP: NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR 16 –18 YEAR OLDS NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING*, 1999
[8] Breakdown Britain, *Educational Failure*, Social Justice Policy Group, 2006
[9] Breakdown Britain, *Addicted Britain*, Social Justice Policy Group, 2006
[10] Hibell B, 2001, European school survey project on alcohol and drugs, Stockholm: Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs

- Mean alcohol consumption per week of boys aged 11-13 has increased from 3.6 units in 1992 to 8.6 units in 2006. For girls, consumption increased from 3.1 units per week to 7.9 units [11]
- Cannabis use amongst school children aged 14-15 leapt from two per cent in 1988 to 29 per cent in 1999 [12]
- Four per cent of school children have tried Class A drugs and one per cent took heroin in the past year [13]
- The UK has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Western Europe [14]
- 75 per cent of under-18 conceptions are unplanned and around half end in abortion [15]
- In 2004 one in ten children aged between five and six had a clinically diagnosed mental health disorder and six per cent had a conduct disorder [16]
- One in 15 children and adolescents regularly self harm [17]
- Every 22 minutes a teenager in the UK tries to kill themselves [18]
- 54 per cent of current depression and 58 per cent of suicide attempts in woman can be attributed to adverse childhood experiences [19]

<u>Conditions create dysfunction:</u>

- 350,000 children have drug-addicted parents and 1,000,000 have alcohol addicted parents [20]
- 15 per cent of children are born into homes without a resident biological father[21]
- 25 per cent of young offenders are already fathers – a cycle of intergenerational failure is likely to repeat itself [22]
- Marriage rates have fallen by two thirds and one in two cohabiting partnerships have broken down before their first child is five (compared to one in 12 marriages) [23]
- 30-40 per cent of abused or neglected children go on to abuse or neglect their own children [24]

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[11] Statistics on Alcohol 2007 England, NHS & ONS
[12] Breakdown Britain, *Addicted Britain*, Social Justice Policy Group, 2006
[13] Ibid
[14] Action Population International, *A Measure of Survival - Calculating Women's Sexual and Reproductive Risk*, 2007
[15] Health Protection Agency & London Health Observatory, *Capital LHO Down*, June 2005 – accessed at http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1194947413986
[16] Meltzer D et al, 2004, Mental Health of Children and Young People, ONS
[17] Department of Health, Mental health of children and young people in Great Britain 2004, 2005
[18] Centre for Social Justice, *The Next Generation*, citing Hawton K, Houston K, Shepperd R (1999) 'Suicide in young people. Study of 174 cases, aged under 25 years, based on coroners' and medical records', British Journal of Psychiatry 175 271- 276
[19] Felitti V & Anda RF (2008) 'The relationship of adverse childhood experiences to adult health, wellbeing, social function and healthcare' in R Lanius & E Vermetten (eds) The Hidden Epidemic: The Impact of Early Life Trauma on Health and Disease, Cambridge University Press, 2008
[20] '*Hidden Harm',* Home Office, 2003
[21] Breakdown Britain, *Fractured Families*, Social Justice Policy Group, 2006
[22] Breakthrough Britain, *Family Breakdown*, Social Justice Policy Group, 2007
[23] Breakdown Britain, *Fractured Families*, Social Justice Policy Group, 2006

Costs of dysfunction:

- The average cost to the state of an individual lifetime on benefits is at least £430,000 [25]
- Social security benefits (including tax credits) increased by £35.5 billion to £142.7 billion in 12 years to 2005/06 [26]
- Violence costs the UK at least £20 billion [27]
- Children in care cost £2 billion annually [28]

Evidence for Early Intervention:

- A child's development score at 22 months serves as an accurate predictor of educational outcomes at 26 years - by the age of three children from disadvantaged families lag a full year behind their middle class contemporaries [29]
- The brain of an abused or neglected child is smaller than normal: the section which governs emotions is 20 - 30 per cent smaller and has fewer synapses [30]
- Family breakdown is linked with low well-being of children: i.e. a UK adult not raised in two parent family was 75 per cent more likely to fail at school and 70 per cent more likely to be a drug addict [31]

Cost of Early Intervention:

- For every £1 invested in services for early years the Government would save £7 in the future [32]

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[24] WAVE Trust, *THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE*, George Hosking

[25] Graham Allen MP, *Get in Early to Change Lives and Save Lives*, July 2008, accessed at http://www.egovmonitor.com/node/20075

[26] Department for Work and Pensions, Departmental Report 2008

[27] WAVE Trust, *Violence and what to do about it*, 2005

[28] Narey M, *Beyond Care Matters: Future of Care Population*, Department for Education and Skills, 2006

[29] The Millennium Cohort Study, 1997

[30] Bremner JD, Randall P, Scott TM, Bronen RA, Seibyl JP, Southwick SM, Delaney RC, McCarthy G, Charney DS & Innis RB, 1995, 'MRI-based measurement of hippocampal volume in patients with combat-related posttraumatic stress disorder', American Journal of Psychiatry 152 973-981; Bremner JD, Vythilingham M, Vermetten E, Southwick SM, McGlashen T & Nazeer A, 2003, 'MRI and PET Study of Deficits in Hippocampal Structure and Function in Women with Childhood Sexual Abuse and posttraumatic Stress Disorder', American Journal of Psychiatry 160 924-932; Teicher MH, 2000, 'Wounds that time won't heal: the neurobiology of child abuse', Cerebrum 2 4

[31] YouGov polling carried out for the Centre for Social Justice and cited in *Breakthrough Britain*

[32] Speech by Paul Ennals, Chief Executive of the National Children's Bureau, at the launch of 'Early Intervention City' in Nottingham