“What’s Missing?”
Can a multi-disciplinary approach to using attachment theory and evidenced-based procedures make visible the gaps in protecting children highlighted by serious case reviews?

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Introduction

The Serious Case Review of Daniel Puckle, murdered by his mother and partner echoed numerous suggestions that the failure to understand the attachment history of the child, and the failure to question the parental construction of the child’s difficulties. Given that the same criticisms emerge from a history of fatal child abuse enquiries (e.g. Baby Peter, Victoria Cimble), it could seem particularly timely and important to look to further understand and why, and what might help make visible what’s missing.

This poster suggests that the inter-agency approach to investigating child abuse cases may draw attention to the areas that appear to be continually missed by professionals.

In particular, its contribution can be seen by the ability of attachment procedures to highlight, and make visible:

- Invisible Children: Compulsive attachment patterns are those where children (and adults) learn to project a false positive self to the outside world, hiding their anger and fear in order to please or placate hospital. High levels of parent and professional attention away from where the risks lies, as these children seem to be happy and doing well. Children (and adults) learn to project a false positive self to the outside world, hiding their anger and fear in order to please or placate hospital. High levels of parent and professional attention away from where the risks lies, as these children seem to be happy and doing well. There is a lack of safety within the organisation were fed into this. Information such as that arising out of the Residential workers’ skills and status. The organisation’s central management’s knowledge of the interviews and phrases with others freely, and share information without it becoming fragmented, incomplete or distorted.

Towards a Common Language Attachment theory is not owned by one agency or profession, and most of its training is on a multi-agency basis. As such, it offers an opportunity for a common language and cooperative dialogue between different professionals and agencies involved in child protection, offering a structure not only to protect confidentiality but also to enhance the assessment process. It is of one of the few tools that can be used to shape the child’s development.

Sally and Chloe – Continued:
The intervention with Sally and Chloe is not a success story, as the assessment was undermined by internal political pressures. Sally and Chloe are seen and interpreted from the outside world, their behaviours are discussed and solutions with others freely, and share information without it becoming fragmented, incomplete or distorted.

Sally and Chloe – Continued:
Sally also undertakes the meaning of the Child Interview (MotC). The interview was classified separately and without reference to (i.e. blind) the case. Sally’s attachment was also classified as high risk and (hostile).

In particular the interview showed a pattern of covert hostility towards the child, interviewers, and the protective intervention.

- Apparent cooperation was undermined by subtle complaints and mocking, and self-justifying comments.
- Incongruities between direct assertions, and indirectly assessed affect. For example, Sally’s statements about Chloe were undermined by hostile and belittling images, negative evocative language, and attempts to re-interpret Sally’s expressions, formulated her, and face-to-face parent-child interaction as assessed using the CARE-Index.
- There was also a very strong positive correlation between MotC and the CARE-Index. It is of one of the few tools that can be used to shape the child’s development.

Through the CARE-Index it is possible to ‘disguise’ the attachment history of the child.

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