

Childhood abuse increases risk of adult suicide, research finds



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People who experienced sexual, physical or emotional abuse as children are two to three times more likely to kill themselves as adults, new research found.

Experts said the findings confirmed the 'devastating effects' of child abuse on mental wellbeing, while one suicide charity said 70 percent of people who had either tried to take their own life or who had thought about it had been abused, theguardian.com reported.

People who were sexually abused as a child were three times more likely than others to try to kill themselves, according to the new study in Psychological Medicine.

And people who were either physically or emotionally abused or neglected in childhood were two and a half times more likely to try to end their lives.

The findings come from research undertaken by academics at the University of Manchester and South Wales University, who analyzed the results of 68 previous studies on the subject from around the world.

Dr. Maria Panagioti, from Manchester University who led the research, said

about "one adult in every three has experienced abuse as a child. This study conclusively gives us solid evidence that childhood abuse and neglect is associated with increased likelihood that they will be at risk of suicide as adults."

The authors said the paper was the most comprehensive review of the evidence underlying the issue. The 68 studies were based on the experiences of 216,600 adults in countries including the US, Canada and Italy, while two of the studies were from the UK.

The paper said, "We conclude that there is solid evidence that childhood maltreatment is associated with increased odds for suicidality in adults."

"All types of childhood abuse are associated with increased risk for suicide attempts and suicidal ideation in adults independent of demographic, clinical and methodological variations across the studies."

Men and women were equally likely to think about suicide or act on suicidal impulses, while the risk of suicide rose as the person aged, they found. Those not in contact with mental health services were at the greatest risk.

Dr. Bernadka Dubicka, the chair of the child and adolescent faculty at the Royal College of Psychiatrists, said, "This study confirms the long-term and devastating effects of child abuse."

"Psychiatrists working on the frontline of mental health care witness the damage this causes to children, adolescents and adults on a daily basis."

Many children cannot get help early in their lives both to prevent them suffering abuse and to start to recover from its consequences, she added.

Ged Flynn, the chief executive of the charity Papyrus, which works to prevent young people taking their own lives, said, "It is no surprise to us that this study shows that historical abuse contributes to some people experiencing thoughts of suicide."

"Around 70 percent of calls to our helpline cite childhood abuse of various sorts, some of which are still current. This can include sexual, emotional, financial abuse as well as neglect."

Flynn stressed that, with the right support, many people who think about suicide can find hope, regardless of how much pain or distress they are in.

Making better use of 'surgeons flipping burgers'

Migration remains one of the most potent international political dividing lines — with arguments about controlling borders and pressures on local services.

But a report from the United Nations (UN) warned that once migrants have arrived, host countries often fail to make use of their talents, BBC reported.

The UN has published an analysis showing only 30 percent of migrants with degrees are in graduate-level jobs.

It comes ahead of a UN convention this year that aims to make it easier for migrants to use their skills and work experience in their new countries.

"Stories of immigrant doctors who are cab drivers or surgeons who are flipping burgers bring to light how much potential is being wasted the world over," said Iva Sheehy, an education adviser with the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

As well as being frustrating for ambitious migrants, the UN said, it is wasteful for economies to have high-skilled people in low-skilled jobs.

Evidence of skills

The analysis, jointly produced by the UNHCR, UNESCO's global education monitoring report and the Education Above All charity, said that the biggest barrier can often be the lack of international recognition for qualifications.

Even though some might have advanced professional qualifications in their home country, if there is no system of mutual recognition, they are effectively treated as if those skills did not exist.

About three-quarters of migrants are in countries without an agreement on recognizing qualifications from the countries that they have left.

"Some migrants and refugees find the procedures for getting their qualifications recognized so complex that they cannot find work at all," said Sheehy.

"This is a global problem, affecting people displaced by conflict across the Middle East, Asia and

in Africa, as well as those arriving in Western Europe and North America.

It is particularly bad for refugees or those escaping violence, who might arrive with little documentation or evidence of qualifications.

"When fleeing a conflict, packing a diploma is likely not to be top of your mind," said Manos Antoninis, the director of UNESCO's global education monitoring report.

Lack of recognition

It is also an issue for mobile professional workers, who might study and train in one country but

The US is highlighted as a place where skilled migrants are particularly likely to be stuck in low-paid jobs.

And in Southeast Asia, a reciprocal arrangement meant to recognize professional qualifications has rarely been used, said the report.

But it commends efforts in Germany and Norway to recognize the qualifications and work skills of those arriving.

Unable to use skills

Even in jobs where there are staff shortages, it can sometimes be difficult for migrants to use their expertise.



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then later move to live and work elsewhere.

In 2019, the UN plans to introduce a "global convention on the recognition of higher education qualifications", intended to make it easier for people to show the value of their qualifications if they move to another country.

It promises 'fair, transparent and nondiscriminatory' approaches to help people get their qualifications assessed by education authorities in another country.

But at present it is very much a patchwork quilt of national regulations — and even when there are agreements in place, this can be more in theory than in practice.

An international agreement from more than 20 years ago promised a framework for recognizing qualifications — but the UN report said that most of the signatories have never put it in place.

In England, there has been a prolonged teacher recruitment problem.

But Beata Pawlak, a secondary school teacher from Poland, said she found it difficult to find work as a teacher or teaching assistant when she moved to live in London.

She has a postgraduate degree and English-language qualifications and 16 years of teaching experience in Poland but has struggled to get into teaching in London.

Instead, she became a nanny and said many other fellow professionals had ended up in jobs such as cleaning or in other non-graduate work.

"I know the work is below my skill level but in the end decided it wasn't worth the effort of applying again and again for teaching work. It was humiliating," she said.

How music helps connect people living with dementia

When Eileen Pegg developed dementia in 2015, she became very anxious and easily agitated.

Her carers at MHA Weston and Queensway care home in Stafford were determined to find a way to make her happier, so they decided to see if music would help, theguardian.com reported.

The care home, which is a specialist dementia care unit, has provided music therapy for more than 10 years, and these sessions have made a real difference to Pegg, according to care assistant Chloe Pugh.

When Pegg, now 91, attended her first music therapy session in 2016, she was crying and unable to calm down. But immediately afterwards, Pegg was a 'completely different person'.

"We can't eliminate her anxiety completely, but we can help to alleviate the symptoms for Eileen, and help her engage more with what's happening around her," said Pugh.

By singing and clapping along to music or playing instruments at her weekly one-to-one classes, Pegg is calmer, which has encouraged her to participate in other activities, thereby improving her appetite and mood.

Pegg is not the only one to benefit from these sessions.

More than 2,000 residents across MHA's 84 care homes take part in regular music therapy groups. And it is not just clinical music therapy that helps dementia patients: Choirs, music groups and specialist apps are all beneficial.

Music uses different parts of the brain from language, so can be used to communicate with people with dementia, even if they no longer speak or seem to understand others' words. As a result, it can help them express feelings and ideas and interact with others.

Research published last year by the International Longevity Centre UK (ILC) and the Utley Foundation found that music has significant physical and mental health benefits for those with dementia and helps them retain their speech and language skills longer.

"Analysis showed that music helps to significantly minimize some of the symptoms of dementia, such as agitation, and can help to tackle anxiety and depression," said Sally Greengross, the chief executive of the ILC.

Little wonder then, that the government wants to expand the use of music for dementia patients, as part of its drive to

expand 'social prescribing'. The National Health Service (NHS) long-term plan, published this week, promised to roll out social

prescribing schemes by then, the plan said.

These link workers will connect patients to local groups and

the health secretary, Matt Hancock.

"This is the kind of good value, easy-to-use social prescrip-



theguardian.com

prescribing, including music and the arts. By April 2021, there will be over 1,000 trained social prescribing link workers and more in place by April 2024, with the aim that over 900,000 people are able to be referred to social pre-

scription services.

"Research suggests music can help people with dementia reduce the need for medication or restraints, address agitation and help people and their families cope better with symptoms," said

that I'm fully behind and I fully support work that helps us move to more person-centered care — a key part of the NHS's long-term plan."

But it comes at a price: The King's Fund has pointed out that

social prescribing can be more expensive to commission than seeing a GP in the short term. And on average, it costs MHA £30 per person for each music therapy session in its care homes.

With social care finances stretched to the limit, music is not a priority at many homes, while the availability of community-based choirs and interactive music groups for dementia patients is limited.

In a bid to make it easier for commissioners, care providers and patients to find out what services are available and to identify gaps, today sees the launch of the Music for Dementia 2020 campaign. The campaign's website will share best practice and research and will have a searchable database of suitable music activities for dementia patients.

"Part of developing the promotion of music for people living with dementia involves being smart about where we support resources, so we need to know where there's already good work happening," said Grace Meadows, the program director at the Utley Foundation and a senior music therapist at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital.

Backed with £1 million from

the Utley Foundation, with additional ongoing annual funding of £500,000, the campaign aims to increase public awareness and backing for music to be an integral part of all dementia care pathways. The funding will finance local and national projects, scaling them up, helping to introduce music where there is currently little or no existing provision as well as training the workforce.

"We want everyone in the UK living with dementia to have access to the music that means most to them and for it to be accessible in the most appropriate and effective ways," said Meadows.

"For some this will mean ensuring they have the right technology — allowing them to enjoy their favorite music wherever and whenever they want. For others it means being able to attend music groups and participate in music-making. For some, it may mean working with a music therapist. Music for people living with dementia isn't a nicety, it's a necessity."

Back in Stafford, Pugh is clear about the importance of music to the lives of those she looks after.

"Music is and will continue to be the heartbeat of care for our residents," she said.