



"Professionals/Authority and The Parent Blame Culture" © by Planet Autism

So What Is Being Said About Parents?

Anecdotally, there are many online stories of parents seeking assessment of their children for conditions such as (*but not limited to*) autism and ADHD, who have been fobbed-off by professionals and often blamed as being the source of their child's behaviours.

It seems to be almost default procedure a lot of the time, to question what is happening in the home environment and send parents on parenting courses, before even considering that the child might have a neurodevelopmental condition. This is entirely unethical. The Government agrees with the research that early intervention is necessary for these conditions, to ensure the best outcomes for the child. These are future members of the workforce (*where their disability allows for this*) and should be a productive part of society, they must have access to the support and help that they deserve and need to enable them to meet their potential and have their wellbeing ensured.

The **British Psychological Society** clearly holds parents such low esteem that they make comments in public such as this (*see P30 of stakeholder comments on the NHS NICE Guidance ADHD consultation*):

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/GID-CGWAVE0798/documents/consultation-comments-and-responses>

"Add – There is also concern about the possible financial driver for parents of having a diagnosis for their child as they may benefit financially from receiving Disabled Living Allowance." ...and here is a screenshot of the offending comment:

British Psychological Society	9	258	Add – There is also concern about the possible financial driver for parents of having a diagnosis for their child as they may benefit financially from receiving Disabled Living Allowance.	Thank you for your comment. This section gives a brief introduction to the reader and is not meant to be a comprehensive background to the ADHD and the complex issues in the area.
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With attitudes like this, it's no wonder that families are struggling with non-diagnoses of neurodevelopmental conditions. Shame on them.

Here is an LA which undertook an autism services scrutiny, here is their report <http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Mid=4954> which has a similar comment: ("Q – Does this put pressure on people to provide a diagnosis?") "**There is also the issue that allowances (eg DLA) become accessible with a diagnosis.**" With that sort of lack of respect for parents there will never be a decent service for families or respect for parents!

Further Evidence For the Problem

There are blogs and web pages about the issue of parent blame – and it's usually mothers shouldering that blame:

"When Mental Health Professionals Blame Parents for Child's Mental Illness"

<http://www.healthyplace.com/blogs/parentingchildwithmentalillness/2012/01/when-mental-health-professionals-blame-parents-for-childs-mental-illness/>

"Please stop blaming the parents!"

<https://faithmummy.wordpress.com/2014/05/21/please-stop-blaming-the-parents/>

"Mothers And Autism: The Evolution Of A Discourse Of Blame"

<http://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/2015/04/mhst1-1504.html>

"Why We Like To Blame Parents (mostly Moms) For Whatever Is Ailing Their Kids"

<https://www.minnpost.com/second-opinion/2011/04/why-we-blame-parents-mostly-moms-whatever-ailing-their-kids>

"Blaming mothers: a disability perspective"

<http://www.bu.edu/bulawreview/files/2015/05/colker.pdf>

It seems from all accounts, to be an endemic problem across the UK and the default position of so many professionals – what a tragic indictment of the UK's so-called "services".

In the Book **"Conducting Effective Conferences with Parents of Children with Disabilities"** by Milton Seligman, two studies on this issue are referenced:

Blaming parents for their child's disability is another concern. A couple of studies affirm that a major factor related to dissatisfaction with conferences is the extent to which **parents** are blamed by school officials for their child's problems (Witt, Miller, McIntyre, & Smith, 1984; Petr & Barney, 1993). Therefore, teachers and other school **professionals** need to be alert to inadvertently making observations that can be construed as **blaming**.

...although it states 'inadvertently' and I don't think there is anything inadvertent about the shocking attitudes of many professionals assessing children.

"Parents Aren't the Problem—They're the Solution"

<https://www.empoweringparents.com/article/parents-arent-the-problem-theyre-the-solution/>

"Parents don't cause autism in their kids, and we need to stop blaming them for it"

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/11/28/parents-dont-cause-autism-in-their-kids-and-we-need-to-stop-blaming-them/>

"Is it autism? Is it something else? Or is it all Mum's fault?"

<http://yvonnenebold.com/is-is-autism-is-it-something-else-or-is-it-all-mums-fault/>

"Mother Blaming"

Unfortunately, "mother blaming," an established pattern in the 1950's and 60's, (Bailey, 1994; Bloch, 1997; Caplan & Hall-McCorquodale, 1985a, 1985b) is a view that persists in many circles. Such an attitude interferes with the alliance that needs to be established with parents. Even new

findings such as etiology, especially as related to children with ADHD (Barkley, 1999), autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD) (U.S. Surgeon General, 1999), have not reversed all of those earlier attitudes. Today, we also know that neurological and biochemical disabilities can create or certainly contribute to serious behavior management problems. "The cause of emotional and behavioral problems is unquestionably complex... I do not believe, nor want to imply, that if an individual child has a mental problem, it must have been caused by the failure of adults to provide for that child" (Bryans, 1999, p. 484). Federal legislation (IDEA) and its language reflect this understanding with regulations that promotes collaboration and proposes that evaluations focus on the child's behavior and classification and not on etiology."

http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/article_view.aspx?ArticleID=208

There are even studies on the matter!

"Reflective Inquiry on Professionals' Views on Parents and About Parenting

A vital point worth noting is that a significant number of professionals in this study held a quite negative view of parents and their parenting practice. About three-fourths (74.36%) did not see parents as capable, and more than half (60%) disagreed that parents could adequately perform their parental role. This finding, consonant with those of other studies, reveals the popularity of parent-blaming among professionals.

Bezdek, Summers and Turnbull's study [23] revealed that professionals were both unable to see things from the families' points of view and likely to see the problem as with the family. Another study [24] reported parents' allegations that professionals often attribute children's problems to parental deficits. This view of professionals, and the emphasis given to parental obligation in child rearing, reflects the traditional nurture assumption [31, 32] that "what influences children's development, apart from genes, is the way their parents bring them up" [33, p.2]. Accepting this assumption, professionals reinforce the mounting social expectation that parents be held accountable for the development of their children;"

<http://benthamopen.com/contents/pdf/TOFAMSJ/TOFAMSJ-7-96.pdf>

What Should be Happening?

How can the early intervention that autistic children need be provided, if instead of being diagnosed and supported, their parents are blamed?

Here is an 'idiot's guide' for professionals in how to communicate with parents and another article on the effective way to work with professionals as equals.

"Professionals Communicating With Parents: The Basics"

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/communicating_with_parents_the_basics.html/context/531

"Effective practice: Parents as Partners"

http://www.keap.org.uk/documents/eyfs_eff_prac_parent_partner.pdf

Respect is key! All the time you assume parents are benefit cheats, who put money above their child's wellbeing and think a diagnosis is a piece of meaningless paper to a parent, you will be failing children and their families. How can you as a professional, have pride in your work and be sure you are putting the child first, if you have a suspicious and negative attitude towards their parents?