

# ***“Impact of Mental Health on Parenting Capacity and the Effects on Children”***

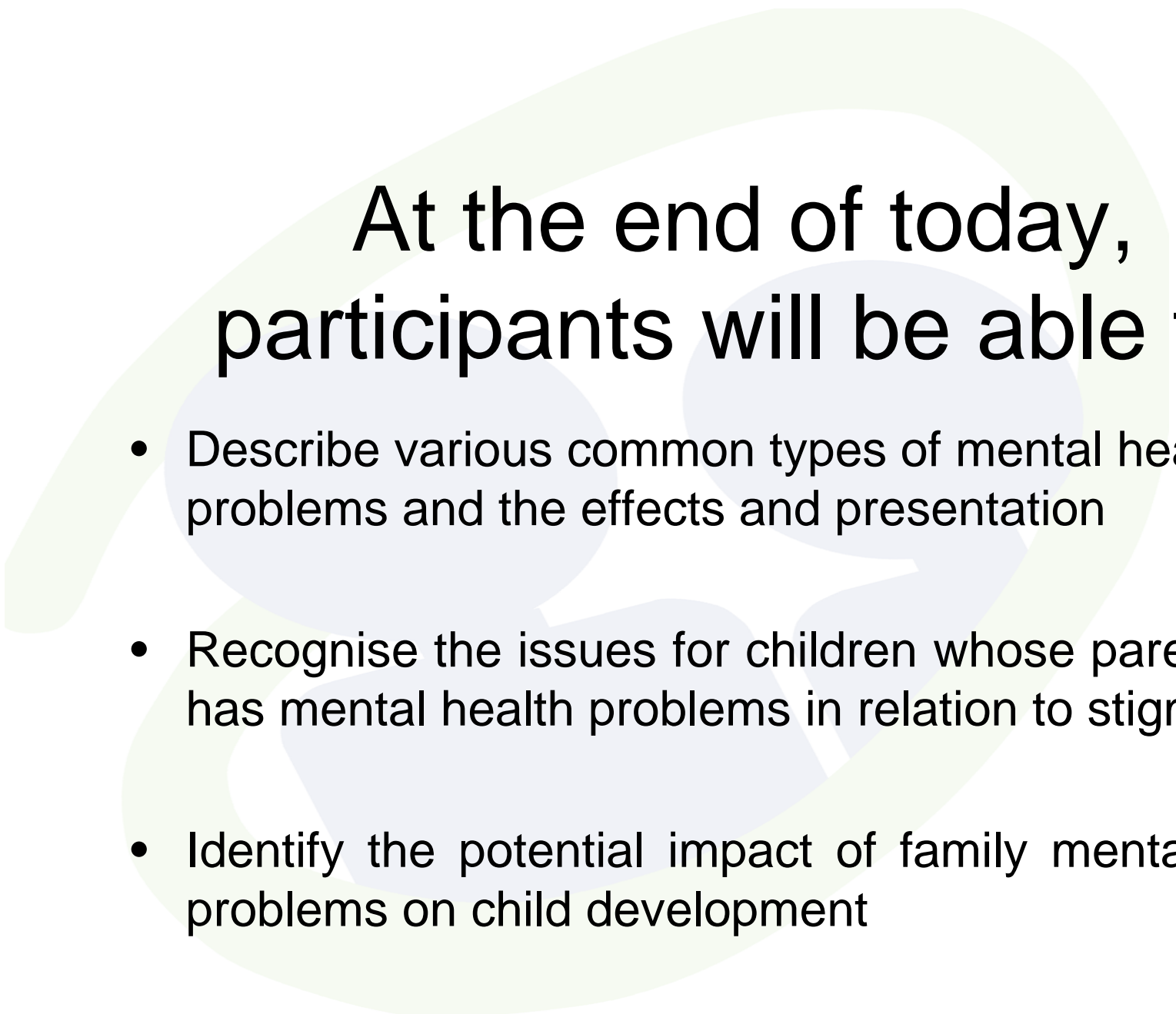
**Karen Dobson**

Advanced Nurse Practitioner  
Safeguarding Children.

5 Boroughs Partnership Mental  
Health Trust



**Safeguarding Children**

A light green hand is shown holding a light blue heart. The hand is positioned as if it is gently cradling the heart. The background is white with a faint, larger-scale version of the hand-and-heart graphic.

# At the end of today, participants will be able to:

- Describe various common types of mental health problems and the effects and presentation
- Recognise the issues for children whose parent/carer has mental health problems in relation to stigma
- Identify the potential impact of family mental health problems on child development

# Guiding Principles

- No assumption can or should be made that people with mental health problems, those in receipt of substance misuse services or those who have a Learning Disability constitute a risk to children simply by virtue of their difficulties.

***Such a view is discriminatory and unjust***

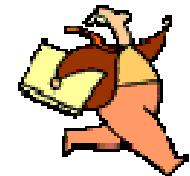
- The children's needs are paramount (Children Act 1989)

# Statistics

- Between 30% and 50% of mental health service users are primary carers of children under 18 yrs (in Gopfert, Seeman and Webster 2004)
- Serious psychiatric disorder is a significant factor in fatal child abuse (National study of Serious Case Reviews 2003 - 5, Barton 2008)
- Mental illness is the biggest indirect cause of maternal deaths
- Parental mental illness can have an adverse effect on child mental health and development (Falkov 1998)

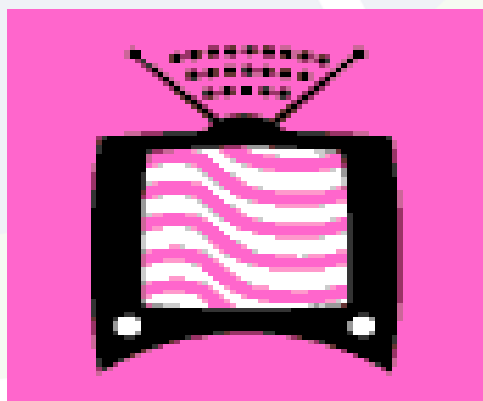
# Exercise 1

## BARRIERS AND SOLUTIONS



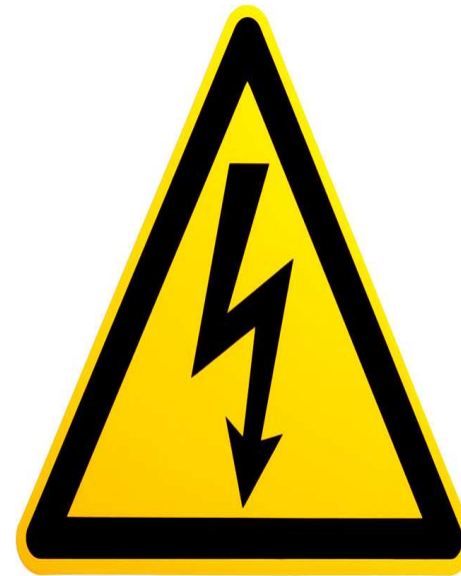
How is it for the child?

DVD



*Which of the Following Poses the Greatest Risk  
In Safeguarding Children?*

- Depression
- Schizophrenia
- Bi-Polar Disorder
- Dementia
- Phobias
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder



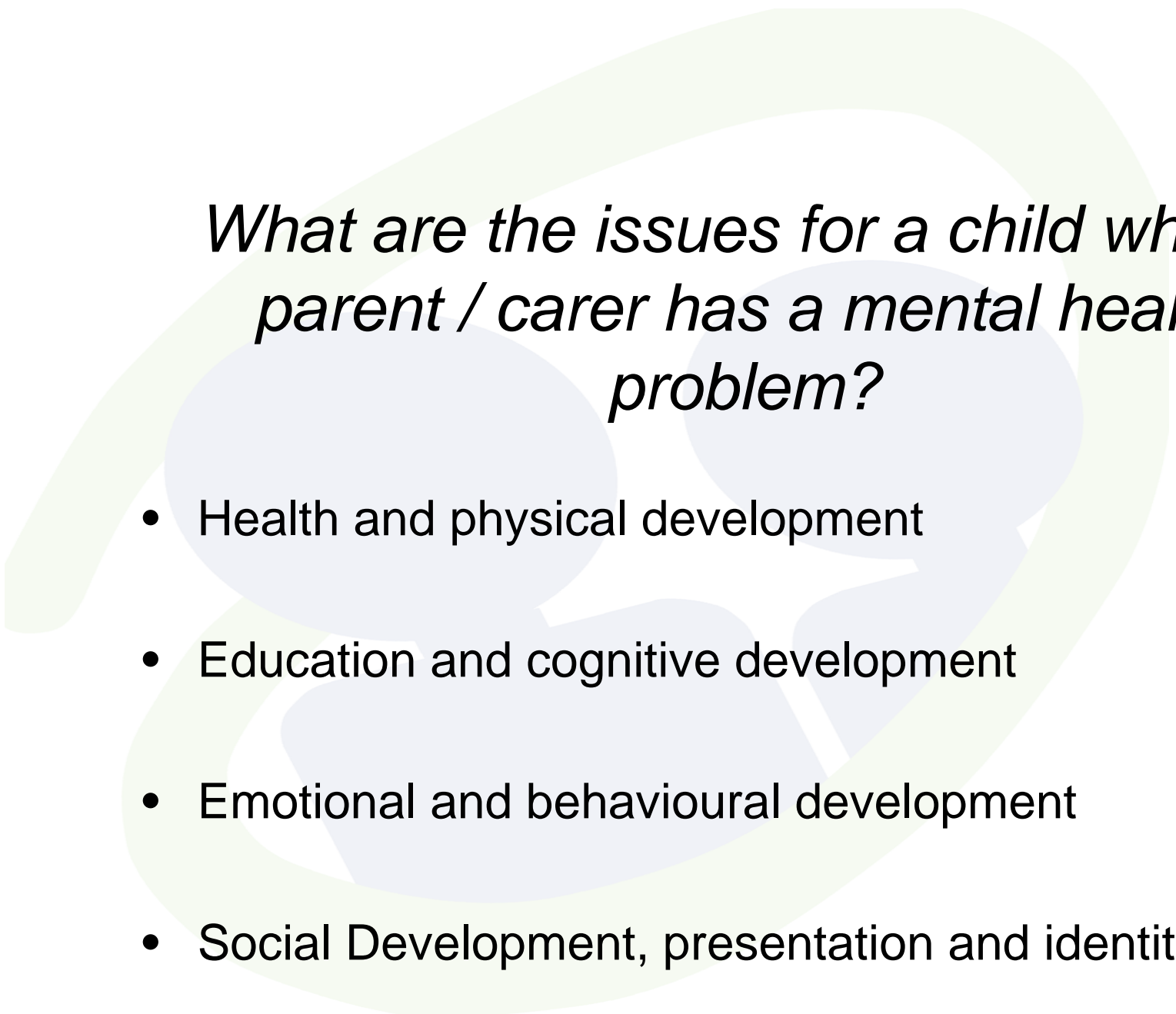
## *Overview of Common Mental Health Problems and Possible Features*

- **Depression** – low energy levels, guilt, no pleasure, flattening of emotion, not able to attend to daily living activities, tearful, intolerant of others, helplessness, hopelessness, suicidal thoughts, irritable, poor sleep, loss of appetite
- **Schizophrenia**-likely to affect 1 in 100 people - False beliefs, hallucinations, muddled speech and thoughts, flattened emotions, changes in behaviour, paranoid beliefs, no insight)
- **Bi-Polar Disorder** (*Manic Depression*) – **Manic** – hyperactivity, poor sleep, false beliefs often grandiose, impulsive behaviour such as overspending – **Depressed** – as above

## Mental Health Problems Continued

- **Phobias** – person totally overcome by fear/anxiety and avoid what makes them frightened ie: agoraphobia may lead to person not going out
- **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)** – Underlying beliefs and thoughts which affect their behaviours ie: repetitive acts such as hand washing or checking switches/locks.

Often associated with contamination or security.



*What are the issues for a child whose parent / carer has a mental health problem?*

- Health and physical development
- Education and cognitive development
- Emotional and behavioural development
- Social Development, presentation and identity

# Some Examples of Possible Impact of Family Mental Health Problems on Child Development

**Health and physical** (evidence which shows developmental delay or being out of step with age appropriate norms:

- Developmental delay, accidents, admissions to hospital, attendance at GP, health checks

**Education and Cognitive** (is any aspect out of step/delayed)

- Poor play skills, speech difficulties or absent speech, intelligent but does not read at expected level, school attendance and performance, struggles with schoolwork, learning disability

**Emotional and Behavioural**

- Has child changed, unusually withdrawn, decline in school work, more clingy, easily upset, unusual behaviour

**Social Development, presentation and identity**

- Persistent lack of friendships or recurrent conflict, bullying or being bullied, adaptation to various social settings, inappropriate dress for social setting, neglect appearance, withdrawn from social settings, poor confidence, race/cultural issues affecting child,