 The impact of…

Everyone is different and will respond differently to difficult experiences. Research\* shows us though that children and young people who are not coping when their parents have significant struggles with thoughts and feeling can be effected with the following if they do not have enough protections in their lives:

Thoughts & Feelings

* I feel irritable and grumpy
* I’m scared and worried about my mum or dad
* I feel unhappy, sad, low, flat
* I feel worried about how mum or dad is acting or what they’re doing
* I feel embarrassed or ashamed of my mum or dad
* I find it hard to concentrate and focus
* I think that my own thoughts and feelings aren’t important
* I think I’m to blame for my family’s struggles
* I don’t really know how to respond when things are always changing
* I worry that I’ll develop the same struggles with my own thoughts and feelings
* I am struggling with my thoughts and feelings
* I don’t always feel sure about my relationship with mum or dad

Body

* As an unborn baby my mother’s stress could damage my brain and body development
* I could be born too early and have a low birth weight
* I could have difficulty sleeping
* Too much stress could get in the way of my body and brain developing as they should
* I might not have my needs met when mum or dad is struggling
* I could be hit, hurt or mistreated

Behaviours & Relationships

* I have difficulty connecting to mum and/or dad (attachment – which can effect my social, physical, emotional and intellectual development)
* My behaviour is sometimes muddled or difficult for others
* I’m being teased or bullied by others
* I can be too physically aggressive
* I take on too much of a caring role in the family. This can mean I have fewer friends, or me playing less, or it sometimes gets in the way of my school work
* When mum or dad is struggling, we sometimes don’t have enough money to make ends meet
* I prefer to keep to myself and be on my own
* I find it hard to talk about what’s happening
* I struggle with school
* I’m getting into trouble too often at home or in my community

It’s important to remember that when children and young people have parents who are significantly struggling with their thoughts and feelings on top of other difficulties (like aggression and violence in the home, parents using drugs or alcohol inappropriately, criminal behaviours in the family, poverty) the impact can be much greater.

\* Research from: ‘Preventing child abuse and neglect: Impact of parental mental ill health on children’ (NSPCC); ‘Parental mental health problems’ (RiP); Parental mental illness: the mpact on children and adolescents’ (Royal College of Psychiatrists); ‘Parental mental health and child welfare’ (SCIE); ‘Think child, think parent, think family’ (SCIE).