



Keeping kids safe these days: a case study of the health and well-being related perceptions and experiences of school-aged children who live in areas of urban disadvantage in Ireland.

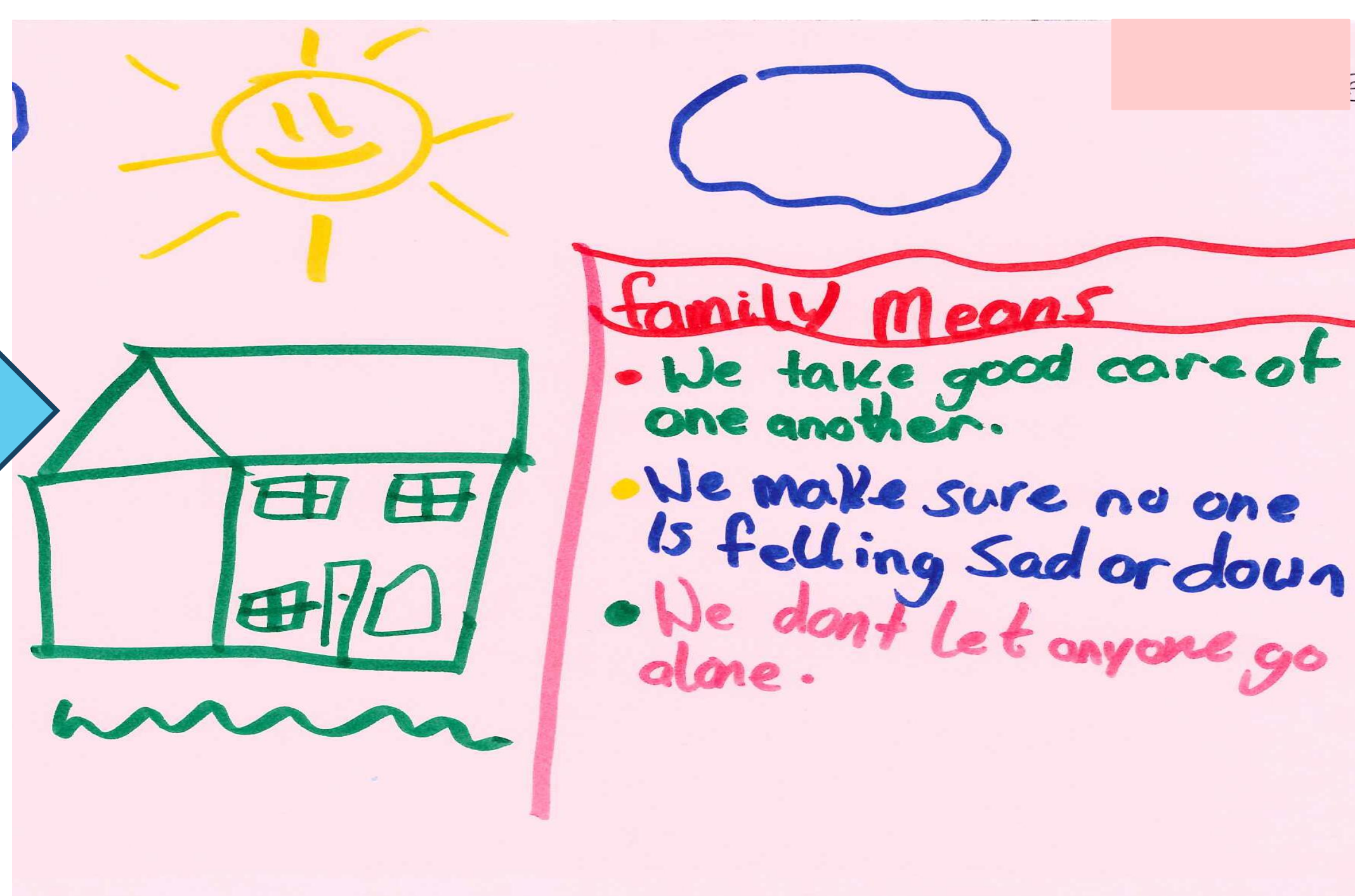
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Background

It is currently understood that that certain aspects of children's lives such as family, friends, relationships, income, life circumstances and the environment in which children live, all have a role to play in relation to child health and well-being. Children interact with the world around them and what they receive back from their immediate environment shapes how they think and how they behave. For children who live in disadvantaged areas, there are additional challenges associated with childhood. Many disadvantaged areas exhibit large child populations, high numbers of lone-parent families, low levels of homeownership, low levels of parental educational achievement, high levels of unemployment and high levels of antisocial behaviour and crime. Growing up in disadvantaged and marginalised areas impedes upon the opportunities which are available to children and their families. In addition, the experience of disadvantage in childhood is recognised as having a variety of undesirable effects on various aspects of children's health and well-being. The aim of the study was

'My Family' drawing by Sophie, 11 years, Family 10.



Study Aim and Objectives

Aim: to explore the health and well-being related perceptions and experiences of school-aged children and their families, who live in areas of urban disadvantage.

Objectives:

- ☐ To explore what 'family' means to school-aged children and their family.
- ☐ To enquire into what 'health' and 'well-being' mean to school-aged children and their family who live in areas of urban disadvantage.
- ☐ To explore health related views and opinions of school-aged children and their family who live in areas of urban disadvantage.
- ☐ To facilitate school-aged children and their family to detail how they maintain their health and well-being.

Methodology

Following ethical approval, case study research (CSR) was adopted to explore the area of interest. Consistent with the CSR approach, data from multiple evidence sources was gathered. Fifteen families participated in the study and interview data were collected from children and adults. All participating families lived in a recognised urban disadvantage area. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the evidence (interviews, children's drawings, fieldnotes, media data) with the assistance of NVivo (version 11) software.

MF8: "Like drugs, eh mixing with the wrong people kind of, like that's my biggest, well for me that's my biggest, biggest fear, I worry about it every day of the week....so especially living where I'm living, that's my biggest fear".

Theme 3: Parenting during difficult times

- ☐ Keeping kids safe these days
- ☐ Managing money

MF6: "Well I suppose the two ways that spring to mind immediately is there would be in, in this area, a high activity of drugs".

MF3: "The teenage thing with children today is of course the drugs and the alcohol (pause) is the fear...That's the battle when rearing".

Findings

The study found that the single greatest challenge for parents of school-aged children who live in areas of urban disadvantage is keeping their children safe from drugs and drug related activity. For families living in areas of urban disadvantage, family support exists in a variety of formats which contributes positively to child health and well-being. Findings from the study indicate that children view their family composition very differently to that of adults. Maternal grandparents occupy a special place in the life of the child who lives in an urban disadvantaged area. The study also found that children view their area in a mostly positive light however, adults have mixed feelings about the area where they live.

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