

7 Minute Briefing: Child “Willow”

Date: 21 Feb 2022

Background

1

In 2021 the SSCP were notified of a serious incident involving a Surrey teenager who had taken an overdose of paracetamol. The young person and their sibling were both placed into foster care and were attending school within another county at this time

Prior to becoming the subject of a care order there had been two episodes of Child Protection planning due to the physical and emotional abuse the children had suffered whilst in the care of their parents. A Rapid Review was conducted and the outcome of this was

that a practitioner event would be held (24 Sept 2021) and all the learning from both the rapid review and practitioner event would be combined into a briefing document. The briefing document would then be shared across the partnership

Concerns raised

2

- This is a child with a history of suicidal ideation and self-harm
- A serious overdose was taken by a Looked After Child, where foster carers or professionals did not have any knowledge of what triggered this.
- The serious physical harm resulting from the overdose which could potentially have lifelong consequences.
- The child’s current mental health and future risks.
- There are some questions about the assessments and actions that have been undertaken to assist and support her

Key Lines of Enquiry

3

What support was offered to secure her placement?

What assessment was undertaken in regard to the child’s needs, vulnerability and the risk of criminal and other forms of exploitation?

Did the assessment consider the child’s Additional Needs or Disabilities (AN-D) and if the EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) was included in any assessment?

The quality of assessment and placement support

Understanding the Risks of Exploitation

Coordination of Care and Team Around the Child/Family

Support for the child’s Emotional Well-Being and Mental Health

Findings

4

The needs, wishes and feelings of the child were not given full and due consideration when developing the EHCP.

The Foster Carers needed additional support to manage specific behaviours
The child engaged better with on-line tuition during lock down (School)

We cannot assume, when it comes to a looked after child, that the services available in one geographical area are the same as in another. This needs to be planned ahead, when possible.

School selection was based on proximity to foster care placement rather than what was best for the child

There was no clear, coordinated MA plan around the child’s mental health, risks of criminal exploitation or sexual exploitation

Greater professional curiosity needed when one word answers are given and application of trauma informed approaches.

Findings

5

Understanding the triggers of historical behaviours is important when assessing and managing current triggers and behaviours.

Inter-agency information sharing has been limited, especially sharing information with the school

Supervision records did not seem to address the mental health needs of the child. E.g. a lack of follow up in relation to the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to ensure the right level of support was being provided from CAMHS

Good Practice: Excellent support provided by the School, who were not equipped to provide professional SEN support but stepped in anyway to ensure that the young person was supported within an educational setting.

Conclusions and Recommendations 1

6

There is a need to promote the effective use of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

When children are placed out of their local authority area the planning and support for the placement should be robust

There is a need for all agencies to understand the Long-term Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences and Cumulative Harm

There is a need for all agencies to adopt trauma informed approaches

The voice of the child should be central and opportunities to engage with the child prioritised

Clear assessment and planning needs to mitigate risks from exploitation, especially when a child looked after is placed out of area.

Conclusions and Recommendations 2

7

Training for Foster Carers should not be generic, it should be tailored more to the individual needs of the child that is being placed with them

School settings must be suitable and able to meet the complex needs of a looked after child. Joint planning with and listening to schools is important and should be strengthened