

Case Studies – Social Work

Case study : Jessica

Jessica is 11 years old and lives with her parents. She has cerebral palsy and is a wheelchair user. Jessica has very limited verbal communication and is completely dependent upon other people for all her daily living needs. She attends a local comprehensive school where she receives 1:1 support. Jessica has found it difficult getting to know the other children in the school and is very unhappy there and cries each day before going to school.

Case study : Geraint

Geraint aged 14 has been arrested at 1 a.m. for criminal damage of a property after a complaint by his parents. He is very subdued and had rejected the offer of a solicitor. A social worker has been called to the police station to act as an appropriate adult as neither of his parents have come with him. During the questioning Geraint gets very upset and said that he only smashed the pictures and doors at the house after his parents kept on and on about how he had never fit into the family properly, about how disappointed they were with his continued poor results at school, and that they wished they had never adopted him. They have said they do not want him to return to the house.

Case study: Victoria- Health, Education, Social Work

Victoria aged 12 provides care for her mother who has complex health needs following a brain tumour. When her father works away from home Victoria has to prepare and administer injections to her mother she also prepares the special food which needs to be given to her mother through a tube directly into her stomach. She has received no formal training to enable her to carry out these procedures – she just follows the instructions that her mother gives her. She also takes on a lot of caring roles such as helping her mother go to the toilet, cleaning and shopping. She worries about her mother and sometimes finds it hard to concentrate in school. She likes to keep a mobile phone on her in case her mother needs to contact her if she is unwell. **See audio visual clip of Victoria's Story**

Case study : Lauren – youth Justice, Police, Education, Social work

Lauren is 13 she has been referred to the Youth Offending Team after being arrested for shop lifting from the local shops. It appears that she has not been attending school regularly for the last 4 months. Her mother works some night shifts as a care worker and expects Lauren to look after her two half brothers aged 2 and 4 if she needs to sleep in the day. Lauren has previously been arrested for disorderly behaviour whilst drinking with an older group of friends.

Case study : Amy

Amy is 13 and is from Gloucester and has been in the care of the local authority since the age of 9 yrs when her mother became increasingly unable to look after her. She is living in a residential home in Mid Wales. She has two younger siblings who are still living with her mother. Amy's father left the family home when the children were young and his whereabouts are not currently known. Amy's relationship with her mother is turbulent and contact irregular. Amy is unhappy at the residential home although she has a good relationship with staff and has some friends among the other young people. She wants to live closer to home and see more of her mother and siblings. She does not want to continue living in rural Wales when she leaves care and feels she is losing her contacts where she grew up.

Case study : Fiona - Police, Education, Social work

Fiona is 12 years old. She has severe and multiple disabilities. She was taken to school by taxi each day and on three occasions arrived home with unexplained injuries. Her Local Authority and Police became involved with the case, which was investigated to an extent by the police. However, the police decided that because Fiona had communication difficulties she was not a credible witness and the lack of clear testimony from her led to the police not pursuing her case. Fiona's injuries remained unexplained. However, Fiona's parents want to lodge a complaint against the police because they claim that failure to interview Fiona effectively contravenes guidance in Working Together to Safeguard Children – this states that 'disabled children with communication difficulties should have available to them at all times a means of being heard...' They feel that her rights have been infringed and would like the IPCC to take this further.

Case study : Hannah– Health, Social Work

Hannah is 10 and lives with her parents and younger sister. She has epilepsy that is not well controlled by medication and has seizures during the day and at night. Her parents have to provide her with a lot of care when she is home and get very tired. They are also concerned that they do not spend enough time with her younger sister. Hannah therefore stays with a link family one weekend a month. She knows that her parents need a break and although Hannah likes the link family, she would prefer not to go.

Case study : Gethin

Gethin is 10 years old and he has been physically abused by his mother. This has been going on for the last three months and his mother has admitted that she hits him when she gets stressed – and recently she has been very stressed because Gethin’s father has left the family home, leaving them without any money. Gethin is very distressed about his father leaving and about his mother’s abuse. The social worker allocated to the case informed the child protection police officer. The police officer felt, in consultation with the social worker, that there was not reasonable cause to believe that a child would be likely to suffer significant harm, and decided not to remove the child. They decided that it is in Gethin’s best interests to stay within the home – the social worker said that Gethin’s mother does not want him to be removed and she is keen to keep the family together. The social worker will monitor the situation carefully and has arranged some interim financial support for the family. She will make sure the police officer is updated when she can.

Case study : Shauna

Shauna is 12 and in long term foster care. Shauna has a younger sister, aged 5, and a younger brother, aged 2, who are in a different foster placement. The plan for Shauna's siblings is adoption. Shauna is currently having contact with her siblings every month. The plan is for this contact to be ended over the next couple of months as Shauna's siblings are prepared for adoption. Shauna is very distressed about this plan.

Case study : Albin

Albin is 17 and is working with a Social Worker and somebody from the Leaving Care Team. Albin has a learning disability and has a statement of special educational needs, having previously had someone to one support to attend a mainstream school. Albin now attends college, undertaking a life skills course.

Albin's workers are concerned about how he will cope living independently and believe that the available supported housing options will not meet Albin's needs. They have requested the involvement of adult services. Adult services are resistant to getting involved and believe that Albin will not meet the criteria for adult services.

Case Study : Bahman

Bahman is an age disputed minor from Iran claiming to be 15 years old. He had been age assessed by a local authority in England as over the age of 18. However, on receiving the age assessment, it was evident to the child advocate that this was not a Merton compliant¹ age assessment. The child advocate wrote to the social services department that conducted the age assessment and requested that they completed another age assessment.

Bahman maintained that he was a minor and was very distressed by the situation that he faced. The child advocate talked to Bahman about other methods of showing the authorities that he is a minor. Bahman mentioned that he has documents with his date of birth on them, that his uncle sent the documents from Iran but that they are all written in Farsi. Bahman is very distressed and unsure what to do.

Merton-Compliant - a term used to describe a local authority age assessment that has been conducted in accordance with the case law on age assessments and is therefore fair and lawful. The term derives from the Merton judgment of 2003 which gives 'guidance as to the requirements of a lawful assessment by a local authority of the age of a young asylum seeker claiming to be under the age of 18 years'.

Case Study 26: Tahir

Tahir is 15 years old and he is from Afghanistan. He came to the attention of services in the UK, when he was picked up by the police and referred to Social Services. During an interview, he stated that he had just arrived into the UK on the back of a lorry, after an 18 month journey from Afghanistan. He fled his home village with his mother, after his father and sister were killed by the Taliban, leaving his surviving sister behind. However, during his journey from his home, his mother also died from injuries received at the point of flight. There were concerns around Tahir's mental state, due to reports of suicide attempts. He was referred to the Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) advocacy worker who assisted him in getting access to medical professionals, solicitors and activities and educational facilities aimed at young people. A referral was also made to Children's Services, who moved him to a hostel for young people. He was told that there are no available foster placements for him, which left him isolated and unhappy.

Case study : Eyllt

Eyllt is 2 ½ years old and is due to have her routine health check up with the family health Visitor at home. This is the third time that Eyllt and her mother have been seen by Karen the Health Visitor. Eyllt speaks Welsh at home with her mother and father. Karen arrives and gets out some coloured wooden blocks, a measuring tape and her notes to document things. Karen and Mum chat in English about how things are in general, any concerns about Eyllt, and are there any questions? Mum mentions that Eyllt still doesn't have many words in her vocabulary and seems to struggle with certain sounds.

Karen suggests that Eyllt may need to be referred to a speech therapist. Mum asks if they can see someone who speaks Welsh to assess Eyllt as the therapist wouldn't know what was being mispronounced if she didn't speak Welsh. Karen replies that this is not possible at the moment but it would probably be OK in English anyway. Mum refused to have Eyllt referred and says she will consider it again in 6 months if there still hasn't been any improvement.

The consultation continues. Karen wants Eyllt to pick up the blocks in the order of colour she asks for. Karen says: "Can I have the red one please"?

Mum repeats – "Gallu di roi yr un coch iddi?" Eyllt responds accurately. This continues until the exercise is complete. Karen leaves stating she will be back for the pre school check up and to get in touch if there are any further concerns.