

## **2.3 Levels of Need and Service Delivery Good Practice Examples- Children living with domestic violence (6 and 13 years old)**

### **Introduction**

Ricky aged 13 years and Bianca aged 6 years are the children of Pat and Frank who have been married for 15 years. The family ethnicity is White/British. Pat is a housewife and Frank has been unemployed following redundancy for 6 months. For most of their marriage the relationship has been violent, usually exacerbated by alcohol. The violence is usually in the form verbal abuse and physical injury to Pat by Frank. The police have been involved on several occasions via the domestic violence unit but to date Pat has chosen to remain in the marital home with Frank and the children. Both children attend local schools.

### **Current service delivery within universal provision and presenting issues**

Ricky's Head of Year has contacted mother with concerns that Ricky's schoolwork has deteriorated over the past 3 months and he has shown little interest in choosing his subject options for GCSEs. Ricky's mother has shrugged off these concerns and says that "Ricky is just being a typical teenager". Subsequently, Ricky has disclosed to his best friend that his father frequently hits his mother which he finds very disturbing and doesn't understand why his dad is doing this. The friend has passed this information on to the year tutor.

Over the last 3 months Bianca's class teacher has contacted mother on three different occasions regarding her disruptive behaviour both in class and at playtime. Mother's has appeared disinterested in the situation at school.

### **Initial targeted response**

Prior to seeing Ricky in private, the Head of Year checked ContactPoint to establish any intervention by other agencies, in particular to check if there had been any involvement around the domestic violence. He also liaised with the designated Child Protection Officer to update her on the current situation and seek advice.

Ricky's year tutor spoke to him in private in an effort to address the alleged domestic violence at home. Ricky was initially reluctant to go into any detail but did verify that both he and Bianca had witnessed his father's violence towards his mother on many occasions. He stated he doesn't understand why this happens and that he has had to call the police himself on a couple of occasions.

The year tutor told Ricky that it is his professional responsibility to inform Children and Young People's Social Care of this situation. He agrees with Ricky that he will take advice from the designated Child Protection Officer about contacting Ricky's parents so that they can first try and see Ricky's Mum on her own.

### **Outcomes of initial targeted response**

The Head of Year manages to get Ricky's Mum on the phone and tells her the actions he needs to take and of his intended referral to social care. He suggests that Mum may want to come into school or meet with the schools Parent Support Advisor to see if any additional support can be offered to her. She says she will think about it and get back to him before the end of the day so Ricky is clear what to expect when

he gets home. Following this conversation Head of Year then makes the referral to Children and Young People's Social Care.

### **Further actions leading to coordinated targeted response**

The social worker rang the head of year to discuss the referral and identify their actions. It is clear they will not be visiting the home that day and this information is shared with Ricky and his Mum. Social Care ask Mum if they can make enquiries about the other children and she agrees on the understanding they will keep her informed first. After this discussion Bianca's school was contacted to gather further information to inform the next steps. Social care then interrogated their own records and contacted the Police Domestic Violence Unit.

The next day after speaking to Ricky's Mum an appointment was made with social care and the parents. When the social worker visited the family home to discuss the situation with both parents she sought permission to speak individually to Ricky and Bianca to inform the assessment.

Mum appears anxious but at the same time relieved that the situation is out in the open. Frank appears distressed and remorseful; and reluctantly agreed to address his anger and alcohol intake. Ricky is relieved and happy that his Dad has agreed to cooperate and hopes that this will end the domestic violence.

### **Outcomes of coordinated targeted response**

The social worker discusses the situation with her team manager who decides that at this stage a core assessment is not required as the parents agree to cooperate to address the issues causing concern. However the suggestion is made by the team manager to Mum that a CAF is undertaken initially with Ricky but also considering if necessary undertaking a separate assessment with Bianca at a later stage. Mum is clear that there is a need to prioritise support for Bianca who is becoming more withdrawn. She also wants a CAF undertaken with Ricky as soon as possible, but after some support to Bianca is arranged. Information on the initial assessment will appear on all the children's records on ContactPoint.

Frank is referred to the STOP project (anger management) and the Leeds Addiction Unit. Pat is approached about accessing emotional support and peer support through the PSA and the local women's group. Pat decides to contact the PSA and take up the initial offer of support.

### **Further actions leading to specialist response**

Three months later Ricky's year tutor continues to have concerns about his general demeanour and his lack of engagement in the school curriculum. On speaking to Ricky he hears that there was an initial improvement in the home situation but unfortunately the last two weeks have been particularly violent. Ricky says that his dad is drinking heavily again, his mum has a black eye and Bianca was jostled by dad during the latest altercation. Bianca was not injured although she was very frightened and upset.

The year tutor makes a second child protection referral to Children and Young People's Social Care.

### **Specialist response**

In view of the past history and the current concerns, the referral team manager (social care) makes the decision that a core assessment should be undertaken. Frank has agreed to move out of the family home until the assessment is completed and is currently living with his younger brother who lives alone in another part of the city.

### **Outcomes of specialist response**

The core assessment is initiated and an initial child protection conference is convened. The decision of the conference is that both children are made subject to a child protection plan.

The child protection plan includes:

- Both children to be referred for counselling
- Both children to attend support groups
- Social Worker to work with both children re self protection
- Both children to be allocated school mentors
- School Health to monitor psychological and physical health of both children
- Frank remaining away from the family home in the short term
- Frank to undertake anger management course
- Frank re-referred to the addiction unit
- Pat to continue counselling
- Pat to be informed of options available if domestic abuse continues

### **Appropriate maintenance within universal provision**

- Regular inter-agency review meetings to assess progress and work towards closure of child protection plan
- Ongoing monitoring by education, health and social care