

2.4 Case Study – Adolescent at risk of Sexual Exploitation

Introduction

Hayley is 13 years old and lives with her father and 2 younger brothers in local authority accommodation in a predominantly white area. Her mother died of cancer 18 months ago. Her father works full-time and struggles to juggle the combined responsibilities of 3 children, household management and holding a job down. He works as a warehouse manager and is out of the house Monday to Friday from 8.00 until 6.15. His income is adequate to meet the family's needs and the children are materially well-provided for. However, he misses his wife enormously. She took full responsibility for their home and children, he deals with these responsibilities largely by delegating them to Hayley.

Current service delivery within universal provision and presenting issues

Hayley attends the local high school where she is in Year 9 is popular with her peers and until recently has been a responsible member of her class and performing well. She was seen to have 'coped well' with her mother's death at the time and is usually kind and caring towards her class-mates. Recently, however, her attendance and concentration have deteriorated, she has started dressing provocatively and she has changed quite suddenly from being a well-behaved, compliant young girl into a more than usually precocious teenager. Her teachers are concerned about her but have been unsuccessful in trying to talk to her. Despite numerous attempts, they have been unable to contact her father to share their concerns with him.

Initial targeted response

Hayley's teachers meet to discuss her situation and share their concerns. They think probably her mother's death is one of the issues now affecting her behaviour. A Learning Mentor (LM) is assigned to work with Hayley and see what is happening at home and in her life generally, to offer support. LM, meets with Hayley a few times and tries to talk with her, but finds her reticent and unprepared to share anything with her. She is unwilling to talk about her father or her brothers or anything about home – and certainly not about her mother. She notices that Hayley has some love bites on her neck, but when asked about these, she just changes the subject. The LM is left feeling worried and anxious about Hayley and reports back her lack of progress. ContactPoint is checked but there is no information about any other services working

with Hayley or the family apart from the GP. A letter is sent to Hayley's father inviting him in for a discussion about her. When he comes in, he explains that he shares the concerns about Hayley but can no longer talk with her himself and is worried about her. She is no longer doing the household chores she used to and is resentful about looking after her brothers after school and getting the tea. He is worried that she has started staying out late, sometimes overnight, and thinks she has found a boyfriend but she is unwilling to talk to him about the subject. Nothing he says to Hayley now seems to have any effect.

Another meeting is arranged with Hayley and her father which they both attend. It is clear that communication between them is not good. It is suggested that a Common Assessment (CA) is carried out with Hayley, which is explained to them both as a way of assessing Hayley's needs and trying to address them.

The CA confirms that Hayley is bright and has the potential to do well at school if she attends. However, it is identified that her emotional needs are not being met, her responsibilities are inappropriate for her age and she needs to feel a normal teenager. Hayley agrees to continue meeting with the LM and to try to talk with her about her situation. Her father agrees to set some time aside each day to talk with Hayley and to cook the meals himself at weekends. The CAF information is recorded which automatically updates ContactPoint, identifying Hayley's common assessment and giving her teachers' contact details. Information recording and storage and the role of ContactPoint as a means of holding information, are all explained.

Outcomes of initial targeted response

Further meetings are set up between Hayley and the Learning Mentor but Hayley misses the first two, which are on days she is also absent from school and turns up late for the third. LM feels she is getting nowhere with her. Hayley does tell her however that her father has only cooked one meal and it was burned and nearly inedible. She is clearly still not getting on with her father and still has love bites on her body. She seems to have lost weight and shows no interest in school.

Further actions leading to coordinated targeted response

At a 3 month review of the Common Assessment it is agreed that more work is needed, and skilled help is required and arrangements are made for the family to be

referred to the local family support project, run by a neighbourhood-based voluntary organisation. They undertake to work with both Hayley and her father. After some individual sessions, he will be encouraged to attend a parenting course which specifically targets fathers; Hayley will have individual sessions with a young people's support worker, with a view eventually to joining a girls group that will explore relationships, sex and teenage issues; and the same worker will do some joint work with both Hayley and her father. The young people's support worker, Jenny, has been invited to and attends the CAF review, where these plans are put in place and is able to establish an initial rapport with Hayley. It is suggested that she might take on the role of Lead Professional, which she agrees to do. Hayley is pleased with this suggestion.

Subsequently a friend of Hayley's, whom she has confided in, told the LM that Hayley is involved in a sexual relationship with a 20-year old man, who is known locally as having a criminal record and has spent time in custody. The learning Mentor questions Hayley about this and she agrees that she is having a relationship but denies that it is sexual.

Outcomes of coordinated targeted response

Hayley meets the family support worker and gets on well with her, although she misses some appointments. She is still not going to school regularly. She talks about her boyfriend to the FSW – he is possessive and her feelings towards him are now mixed - she is a bit scared of him and he can be threatening but she doesn't feel she wants to leave him. She makes it clear she is very much missing her mother. FSW's assessment is that getting into this relationship has been her way of finding a loving relationship to replace mum but it isn't working out as she hoped and she is now feeling anxious and depressed. Hayley's father attends the parenting classes and feels helped and supported but still out of his depth with his daughter. His unaddressed grief at the loss of his wife surfaces and he's directed towards a local bereavement service (Cruse). FSW talks to Hayley about her mother's death but feels she needs specialist help which she can't provide

Further actions leading to specialist response

Hayley comes to see Jenny with a black eye. Her boyfriend has hit her. Hayley is upset but defensive. She says it's not the first time this has happened but she still

loves him and won't leave him. Jenny assesses that Hayley is now suffering 'significant harm' and refers her to Social Care with her knowledge. Social Care convene a Child Protection Conference.

Specialist response

In addition to Social Care, the Child Protection Conference is attended by Hayley and her father, Jenny, Hannah's Year Head, the School Nurse, Angela the Learning Mentor, the Police and Probation. The Child Protection Coordinator explains the purpose of the Conference to Hayley and her father, summarises the concerns that have led to it and the need for the professionals involved with Hayley to make sure that she is safe. Jenny, as the Lead Professional, talks about the work she has undertaken with Hayley and the other agencies share their knowledge of the family and the input they have had. H and her father are asked for their views. Hayley starts to cry and says how much she is missing her mother. She knows her father is too, but they never manage to talk about her, partly as he is always so busy. She likes seeing Mick, her boyfriend, because, when he hasn't been drinking, he listens to her and treats her as an adult. Hayley's father accepts what Hayley says but doesn't know how to talk to her. He has tried but without success so far. The police representative talks about Mick – he has a substantial record and is currently subject to a Probation Order. The Probation Officer confirms he has breached for his recent behaviour (his unlawful sexual relationship with Hayley and his assault on her) and taken back to Court, where he is likely to receive a further custodial sentence.

The decision is made to put a child protection plan in place including following:

- A named social worker is allocated to the family, on the understanding that future work will be led by other agencies, who have a relationship with Hayley.
- Hayley and her father will be referred to the SAD Events Team/CAMHS for joint work around their bereavement and on their relationship.
- Hayley will continue to see Jenny on a regular basis, who will continue in her role as Lead Professional

Outcomes of Specialist Response

3 months later, Hayley and her father have attended weekly sessions with CAMHS, working alongside the SAD events team. They have been encouraged to share their

feelings about Hayley's mother's death, and their relationship has improved enormously as a result. Hayley's father has realised he can afford to work less and has cut down his overtime. He now works just 9.00 – 5.00 and consequently has more time for Hayley and the younger children and to share in activities with them. He can also take on an some responsibility for household tasks instead of leaving them all to Hayley, who is now doing a more appropriate share.

Hayley still sees Jenny regularly and enjoys talking to her. With Jenny's support she has had tests for sexual disease, but is fortunately clear. She has also not become pregnant. She talks about her feelings for Mick. Although she agreed to charges being pressed against him, she was initially very upset that he was being taken back to Court as a result and later committed to custody. Jenny is someone who she can share these feelings with as well as 'female' things with, something that Hayleys' father cannot do. Jenny is in the process of introducing her to a girls' group that she runs, where Hayley can talk about relationship and teenage issues in a protected environment. She is aware that Hayley needs to move on and not become too dependent on her.

Appropriate maintenance with universal provision

6 months later, Hayley is doing very well. She has attended FSW's girls' group and really enjoyed it and has now moved onto attending a local mixed youth club. She is now attending school regularly and is reaching appropriate attainment levels. She is getting on better with her father

Her child protection registration status is reviewed at a Review Conference and the decision is made to de-register her. Her future progress will be monitored by the school.