

Case AO

Safeguarding Practice Review

Jasmine

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Background

- 17 year old Looked After Child
- Long history of neglect and adverse childhood experiences – parental drug use, custodial sentences
- Well known to number of services
- Evidence of child centred practice across the partnership underpinned by some good information sharing
- Drug related death



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Who Was Jasmine?



Jasmine's Early Life

- Early childhood: living with mum and dad, found wandering on the street at very young age.
- Mum and dad both using drugs including heroin
- Older half siblings (by mum) went to live with their birth father – mum left the county
- Spent time in and out of different foster carer homes
- Showed promise at school but hypervigilant - an early Education Psychologist report recognized trauma responses.
- Attendance decreased the older she got.
- Lived with gran and dad (separately) during Covid
- Contact with Youth Justice Service from early teenage years
- Moved to Norwich with dad – Complaints of noise



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Two years leading up to Jasmine's Death

- Always close with gran and dad but dad had particular pull and she was very loyal
- Spent time living at dad's (not officially) before dad was recalled to prison
- Upset with dad over (exploitative) relationship with Jasmine's peer – felt abandoned by dad
- She cared about some of the professionals in her life and worked with them, knew they cared about her
- People not always sure where she was but she did make regular contact with key people to let them know she was safe – acknowledged concerns about exploitation
- Some knowledge of her peer group and/or adults she was socializing with but lots of gaps
- She liked partying and going to raves; started to drink more/take drugs as she got older
- Moved to supported accommodation and stayed there a few times a week
- Becoming more settled: with boyfriend for extended period; started college and had identified aspirations for the future; was looking forward to getting a flat of her own
- **Was independent, well liked and popular**



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Terms of Reference: Key Lines of Enquiry

- What evidence is there of the impact of the joined up multi-agency response to Child AO, including understanding her lived experience, consistent child-focused practice and the importance of building trusting relationships?
- How well do we support our adolescent Looked After Children as they mature and explore their independence? What do we do to help support their resilience, risk awareness and risk management in the context of historical adversity and trauma?
- What did agencies understand of the relationship that Child AO had with her father and the implications this had for her relationships with others? How did this impact the implementation of safety planning? How well did we understand father's parenting capacity?



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TOR – Key Lines of Enquiry, cont.

- How do professionals know, understand and manage agency and risk when working with **adolescents using alcohol and drugs**? How does this inform our assessment of risk of exploitation? How effectively were any potential risks communicated across the multi-agency professional network?
- How are **developmental, transitional and mental health issues** understood and supported? What consideration and understanding is there to mental capacity within this cohort and **how adolescents exercise agency**?



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Transitional Safeguarding Framework

Case reviewed through lens of transitional safeguarding:

- **Evidence Informed:** Different sources bring different insights
- **Contextual/Ecological:** Places/spaces, People, Societal factors
- **Transitional/Developmental:** Where the young person is, not what their age is – not a straight line
- **Relational:** Trust needed to build positive identities, responsive, attuned
- **Intersectional – equality, equity, diversity and inclusion:** Recognising the different identities that impact us
- **Participation:** Choice and agency AND safeguarding



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Learning – Jasmine's Voice

"I know all the stuff around exploitation, and to be honest I'll probably be high, standard, then medium then high and it will repeat itself, but that isn't because I am being exploited - it's because certain people don't trust the friends I have, then add boys in the mix and it doesn't look great, but I think people forget these are my people"

"No offence, cos I'm sure you're both lovely, but I don't want to have to get to know you, I just want to start the work."

"Dad is back in prison and I feel alone and abandoned"

"I am so glad you have been my youth worker, and that you have stuck with me for so long - you have helped me and we have had some really good conversations - thank you for being there for me even when I thought I didn't need anyone"

Learning – Key Messages

(1) Relationships are the foundation of all interventions

- approaches need to be **flexible and personalised** – young person focused not service focused - to ensure young people have parity to access for the support they need.
- professionals **need to go to where young people are in a timely way**; consideration needs to be given to barriers and enablers so that their experience is understood.
- relationship work needs **to account for all the relationships the young person has** with family, peers and professionals.
- opportunities for the **professional network to foster relationships with each other** that allow thoughtful reflection, effective interventions and opportunities to address misunderstanding or conflict.



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Learning – Key Messages, cont.

(2) Partnership working is more than information sharing, it requires collective action

- partnership working is about **pooling collective knowledge and doing something** with this.
- strength based partnership working requires understanding what each partner can bring to the work (no matter how on the periphery they may seem), **communicating the knowledge, and then utilising this knowledge to achieve a shared understanding and approach.**
- multi-agency safeguarding is a **collective responsibility**. This is important not only for work with individuals but also for **harnessing responses to safeguard young people in places and spaces outside of the home.**



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Learning – Key Messages, cont.

(3) System leaders need to encourage and enable practice that spans agency boundaries

- need for **flexible approaches that recognise the importance of both/and responses** - at an individual and wider level.
- leaders need to be able to articulate the change they would like to see.
- change has to **build upon a shared evidence base that triangulates research, professional expertise and the experiences of young people.**
- change also has to recognise that this is not simply about changing systems but about **recognising the human.**



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Making Change Happen

Leaders have to support the workforce to make this change through adequate resourcing and structural support, as Dez Holmes (Research in Practice) writes:

“Work with young people facing harm, done well, is relational not only transactional; emotional not only procedural; and is as concerned with ‘what matters’ as much as ‘what works’. Policy, sector leadership and direct practice must all contend with these wider complexities, and must engage with thinking and feeling as much as doing, if we are to continuously improve our offer to young people.”



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Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Conduct a specific, comprehensive **mapping pathway of the mental health system**. The resulting work needs to consider the strength, speed, creativity, flexibility and effectiveness of mental health pathways in relation to the aims of the partnership and be reported to the Delegated Safeguarding Partners within six months of publication of this report.

Recommendation 2: **Promote the good relational practice** with young people and professionals that was evident in this review through a programme of dissemination.



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Recommendations, cont.

Recommendation 3: Use existing mechanisms to strengthen multi-agency communication, reflection and accountability across services provided for adults and children: promote the use of the Joint Agency Group Supervision (JAGS) where transitional safeguarding is featured and provide an evaluation of all JAGS that feature this age group, drawing out thematic learning.

The reporting period should focus on those JAGS in the six months following the publication of this report and include detail of all participating agencies.



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Recommendations, cont.

Recommendation 4: The partnership should develop specific resources for working with men when interactions between fathers and staff are seen as confrontational, lacking co-operation and proving ineffective.

NB Whilst this review was specifically about fathers, any resources produced should be mindful that any person in a care-giving role can have relationships with professionals that are seen as confrontational, lacking co-operation and ineffective.

Recommendation 5: Agencies working with children at risk of exploitation should evidence how they support staff to develop skills to map and work with the extended family network.

Recommendation 6: Each agency needs to review their processes to debrief and support staff following an unexpected death of a child or young person.



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Discussion Questions

- What aspect of this report resonates with your agency/team and why?
- How confident are you working with adolescents – particularly those at risk of exploitation - and what has worked for you?
- How do you work with families where there is hostility towards professionals/authority?
- How do you build and work with family networks?
- What experience do you have of JAGS?



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