

Integrated Early Support

CASE STUDY 1: Emma

Mum of two young children, Emma, presented herself at a children's centre asking for a food parcel voucher and for general support with benefits. A referral was made into the centre for additional family support, however, the case was also highlighted following a referral from the Early Support Access Team (ESAT).

ESAT was alerted by the police when Emma contacted them to report that she had been the victim of domestic abuse. Her partner, who had been drinking all day, subjected her to a violent physical attack, which she was initially reluctant to report. Emma was assigned an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor and the case was referred to the Integrated Early Support Access Team.

The team conducted a 360° profile of the children, woman and her partner, which revealed the children were not known to Social Care, and that her partner had a history of domestic violence and aggressive behaviour towards his previous partners.

He also had a history of mental health problems, substance and alcohol misuse. There was a suggested diagnosis of anti-social behaviour disorder and he was assessed as moderate risk of harming himself. Probation judged him to be high risk for reoffending and medium risk for harming children. However, in light of the 360° profile information, they were in agreement that he would be high risk to children. Police had offences recorded involving a weapon, violent behaviour, self harm and domestic abuse.

The Independent Domestic Violence Advisor arranged to have the case taken to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). At the case management allocations meeting it was agreed that MARAC would be asked for permission for the mother to be given historical information about the perpetrator to ensure she was made aware that he may pose a risk to her children and that there was a history of domestic abuse.

The new multi-agency approach to Integrated Early Support has accelerated the rate at which these interventions have been implemented, reducing the risk of further abuse or harm to either Emma or her children.

Historically at the onset of involvement, the Children's Centre would have had only the information that the mother provided when she presented at the centre. The mother chose not to disclose the domestic abuse. It may have been weeks or even months before the case work gained the information that the 360° profile provided. This would have significantly delayed the triggering of professional support from the multi agency case management allocations meeting, which immediately agreed to deploy an individual to support the Team Around the Family.

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CASE STUDY 2: Debbie

Debbie is the subject of two Community Orders (for battery and harassment) and is awaiting sentence for a third offence (dangerous driving). In the last year Debbie has been arrested four times and has been involved in 15 police incidents. Debbie exhibits unpredictable behaviour, and has a history of alcohol abuse and self-harm.

Cheshire Police has responded to eight domestic abuse related incidents involving Debbie so far this year but she has refused to engage with support services.

There have previously been two referrals to the Domestic Abuse Family Safety Unit which Debbie did not engage with; a GP referral to an alcohol service which Debbie did not attend; and a mental health referral for psychiatric support which she also did not attend and was discharged. Debbie receives support regarding housing from Chester Lodgings and Support Providers (CLASP).

Debbie's two previous partners have their own history with Probation, with one having 119 contacts with Probation in the last year, and the other having 18 court sentences.

The involvement of Integrated Early Support has provided Debbie with a single case worker to help her focus on her issues and address her offending. Debbie does not need to repeat her story to lots of different professionals as all relevant agencies have access to a full 360° profile of her situation. She deals with a single case worker with whom she is building trust.

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CASE STUDY 3: Harry

Harry lives with his Mum and younger brother. He also has three older brothers and one older sister. His Dad lives in the area. Both his parents and all his siblings have had some involvement with public services. The family has been known to social care since 1997 and police involvement is evident, along with a history of domestic violence.

Harry is described as being abusive, defiant and unwilling to respond to instructions at school. He is on a behavioural improvement plan but is not engaging, has assaulted pupils, has repeated exclusions from school, is currently at risk of permanent exclusion, has been reported missing from home several times and has started to commit crime.

Harry's Dad is currently on bail pending a case of assault and is alleged to be responsible for domestic violence towards Harry's Mum. There have been several police visits to the home address after bricks were thrown through windows. Three of Harry's older siblings have historic convictions (assault, possession of class A and C drugs, possession of offensive weapons). Harry's younger brother is receiving support from school regarding self-esteem.

Initial engagement with Harry's Mum revealed that she recognised that she was struggling to cope and expressed a willingness to engage with Integrated Early Support.

The 360° process provided a comprehensive understanding of the case, including an understanding of family dynamics, which helped to identify where to focus support for the most benefit and potential avenues of engagement.

A TAF (Team around the Family) was initiated and the issues of anti-social behaviour and education became the initial focus, working with Harry's school with support from Educational Welfare.

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CASE STUDY 4: Kieran

Kieran lives with his Mum, stepdad, an older sister, a younger brother and two younger stepsisters. The family have had involvement with social care since they moved to the area in 1996.

Kieran has challenging behaviour and attends a specialist school. He has poor attendance and truants. Kieran's Mum has been prosecuted for her children's poor school attendance. Kieran and his siblings have been reported as missing from home and having expressed not wanting to return home. Kieran has started to commit crime and misuse drugs and alcohol

A 360° profile revealed that Educational Welfare and the Youth Offending Service were already involved and the family had contact with a GP and Health Visitor but failed to attend appointments at their Children's Centre.

Kieran's Mum is known to the Domestic Abuse Family Safety Unit as a high risk victim but she denies any abuse. Her Health Visitor has reported facial injuries and there have been numerous police call outs between 1998 and 2003 regarding domestic violence. Police also report concerns relating to Mum's alcohol use.

Kieran's sister is known to the Youth Offending Service due to theft and assault and his stepdad is known to Probation and has 15 court sentences.

Integrated Early Support has enabled a more co-ordinated and effective approach to interventions with Kieran's family who are reluctant to engage.

Initially case workers have focused on building trust and addressing school attendance to produce immediate tangible benefits to the family and improve outcomes for the children.

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CASE STUDY 5: Michael and Sarah

The Early Support Access Team was alerted to the case of Michael and Sarah who had recently separated due to an escalation of domestic abuse by Michael towards Sarah. As a result of the abuse Sarah had fled the home to the safety of a refuge.

Up to the point that Sarah left the family home it was clear that interventions from the police, and other public services, were on the increase. The relationship had been chaotic and violent; it was clear that alcohol abuse had been a contributory factor to the relationship deteriorating and Michael's re-offending behaviour towards Sarah. The family home was about to be lost and the future was bleak.

During June 2013 the Navigate Safer team met Michael and discussed the issues that were affecting his

behaviour contributing to the predicament he found himself in. It was clear that Michael needed help with his alcohol dependency and assistance with finding stable accommodation.

The Navigate Safer team put measures in place to make sure Michael received the right professional support, in particular to tackle his alcohol dependency.

As a result of effective signposting and support measures, Michael's drinking started to subside. In a short space of time, with the assistance of Navigate Safer, Michael started to have focus; he was engaging with agencies and attending pre-arranged courses. More recently, and with the support of Housing Options, Michael has moved into his own flat where he can continue to rebuild his life.

It is clear that the support Michael has received from Navigate Safer has had a positive effect on his wellbeing and has provided the guidance Michael desperately needed to address his offending behaviour.