

Recurrent Care Proceedings Change Project

Exercise One: Mapping Service Provision

Case Study 1: Chantelle

Chantelle is 19 years old and pregnant with her second child. Chantelle had her first child Aiden when she was 15 years old. Aiden has been adopted.

Chantelle had been known to Children's Services as a child after she made several allegations of neglect and maltreatment to her school teacher, but she later withdrew these allegations. Some family support had been offered under a CIN plan and Chantelle's mother had attended a parenting group but no further action was deemed necessary.

When she was 15 Chantelle left the family home and moved between friend's houses. She was not attending school or college. Eight months later, a family friend called children's services concerned about Chantelle who had arrived at her home, begging to be allowed to stay, and had revealed that she was pregnant.

Children's services began an assessment, during which it was confirmed that Chantelle was 20 weeks pregnant. During the assessment Chantelle disclosed that she had been physically maltreated by her step-father and mother over a number of years. She had not been able to get any help and that was why she left. She said that her step father 'ruled the house' and that he punished her severely by withdrawing food and locking her in a wardrobe. She said she frequently left home to stay with friends when she was growing up. She was angry with her mother because she felt she did not protect her. She also knew her step-father was violent to her mother. Chantelle felt let down by services as she said she had tried to get help but no one really believed her. Chantelle did not want to return home and it was agreed that she should be accommodated under section 20.

Chantel explained that when she had left home at 15 she had headed to family friends in London but had moved about a lot. She also told the social worker that she had 'done a lot of partying' and had drunk a lot of alcohol and used cannabis regularly and amphetamines on occasion. She did not know who the baby's father was as she had had a number of casual relationships over the last year.

Once her baby, Aiden, was born, mother and baby moved to a foster placement straight from the hospital. Due to concerns regarding Chantelle's age and recent past, a decision had been made to apply for an Interim Care Order for Aiden immediately after his birth and this had been granted. Chantelle had expressed her desire to be a good mother for Aiden and staff at the hospital had been impressed with the care and attention she had shown her baby.

In placement Chantelle showed a great deal of emotional warmth towards her son. She breast fed him for the first few weeks and took responsibility for all the night time feeding and changing. However, after the first month, the foster carer had contacted the social worker with concerns that Chantelle was losing interest and no longer prioritising Aiden. The foster carer felt that Chantelle constantly put her own social life above spending time with her son and often left Aiden to cry while on her mobile phone. She had also gone out on several evenings leaving Aiden with the foster carers despite this not being part of the agreement.

When the issue was discussed with Chantelle she said that the foster carer was overly critical of her and wanted to take over Aiden's care and said she went out to get some space from the foster carer who was constantly watching her. She thought that the foster care wanted Aiden for herself and didn't think Chantelle was a good mum.

A crisis point was reached when Chantelle left the foster placement following a row with the foster carer and did not return home for two days. When Chantelle returned to the placement the foster carer did not feel she could continue to work with Chantelle. The local authority decided that they would return to Court and seek a full care order for Aiden. Chantelle had said she did not know who Aiden's father was and no family members were put forward for assessment. Chantelle attended contact several times but was very emotional and eventually stopped attending. Chantelle did not attend any subsequent court hearings and professionals reported that she was continuously absent from the new foster placement they had subsequently found her and that she was not attending any other professional meetings. The Local Authority sought and was granted a placement order for Aiden, who went on to be adopted.

Chantelle is now 19 and is 20 weeks pregnant with her second child. She was referred to children's social care by her midwife. Chantelle is living with her partner who she has been in a relationship with for a year. She is in her second year of a college course studying health and social care and is doing well. There are some concerns regarding domestic violence and there have been a number of police call outs over the last six months. Chantelle is extremely anxious about children's social care becoming involved again. She has told the midwife that following Aiden's adoption she hit a real low and that she felt she received no support. She feels she has worked hard to turn things around and is proud of her achievements. Whilst she is aware of the volatility in her relationship she says that there are also many positives. Chantelle has told the midwife she is prepared to do anything to keep this baby as she 'can't go through it again' but is reluctant to attend meetings with children's social care because she does not trust them.