

Gwent Safeguarding Board: 7 Minute Briefing

Learning from a Multi Agency Professional Forum - working with adolescents

What to do Learning Opportunity

Reflect on the subject discussed and think of how this subject could have presented in your work with vulnerable individuals?

Ask is there any relevance in cases you have worked or situations you have encountered?

What would you have done with such concerns when working with vulnerable individuals? And what are the barriers to practice in your organisation?

Identify key support for yourself in your team.



Context

This Multi-Agency Professional Forum considered the case of a 17 year old child who was looked after, when convicted of a serious, violent offence. The young person had been placed out of county for over 2 years. Areas of good practice and learning themes were considered, using information from social services, Youth Offending Service, police, residential placement, courts and third sector support workers.

Three planning sessions were held followed by one Reflective Practice Session which enabled practitioners working with this young person to reflect on areas of multi-agency practice and learning themes.

This young person was a repeat, vulnerable missing person. The timeline considered highlighted concerns in relation to episodes of missing, varying engagement, drug misuse, court appearances, county lines and behaviour/associations.

Learning Theme 1 - Relationship with a Trusted Professional

- This case highlighted the importance of identifying a consistent, trusted professional to engage with the young person, particularly when many agencies are involved on a daily basis. The important consideration is how to support staff to manage and promote this kind of trusted working relationship.
- It is beneficial to ensure a good awareness of the impact of staff moves and changes and to try to prevent this where possible.
- In addition, keeping the same worker, or returning to the same worker, where an effective relationship had been established should be attempted, again where possible.

Learning Theme 2 - Transition into Adulthood:

- The importance of supporting young people through the transition from childhood into adulthood was a feature of this case. Challenging behaviours, in the form of increasing missing episodes and disengagement were presented. These may have been contradictory to the young person's internal anxieties linked to becoming an adult, which gave a misleading impression of what support may have been required.

Learning Theme 3 - Intelligence gathering and communication

- Effective practice in this case highlights the importance of sharing information between agencies and across boundaries (in this case triple boundaries), strong management oversight and consistent communication between residential placements and other agencies.
- There were also areas of learning identified in relation to intelligence-gathering, seeing the bigger picture and communication, within this case. One suggestion is that a multi-agency chronology would enable all those involved agencies to understand what other information is available.
- Using information from a wide range of sources to build up softer intelligence may help to provide a more proportionate response to some of the presenting behaviours suggesting gang involvement, exploitation risks or county lines. The support of licensing, disruption and soft intelligence can also be utilised effectively.
- Exploitation risks can also be considered more broadly. With the inclusion of softer intelligence further exploration within this case could have been given to all forms of exploitation, including child criminal, as well as county lines.
- A critical balance is needed in protecting young people from harm, not wanting to criminalise a looked after child but also ensuring that others who may be at risk are also protected. In similar cases, it would be worthwhile utilising the community-based, third sector teams as much as possible who often provide richer pictures of associations, networks and risks

Further 7 Minute Briefings relating to a range of safeguarding topics, providing learning opportunities and practitioner tips can be found on the following website:

www.gwent.safeguarding.org.uk

Learning Theme 4 - Cross border working

- Effective practice in cross-border working is demonstrated in this case. Examples such as the hosting / caretaking Social Services team serving more than a perfunctory role, with identified responsibilities and providing local knowledge, with good joint working were featured.
- Good communication between the home YOS and the caretaking YOS were also a feature in providing intervention to attempt to manage the presenting risks.
- A key feature of this case was the young person's sense of invincibility from punitive action, with frequent returns to court following breach action and an accumulation of community disposals added to the existing order. It is clear that in cases such as this, Her Majesty's Court and Tribunal Service are very much steered by sentencing guidelines and recommendations from partner agencies when considering appropriate sentences. However, a strong understanding of agency roles, remit and responsibilities, as well as limitations, may help to prevent inter-agency frustrations.
- A suggested mapping exercise with all involved agencies, can help to ensure that specific agency roles are clearly understood.

