

Lessons Learned



Prada and Jordan's Story...

At the time of the incident that prompted the Child Safeguarding Practice Review, Prada was 17 years old, and Jordan was 15. Both young people were under the care of the local authority with Prada living in supported accommodation and Jordan in a foster care placement. One day in early 2020, Jordan had gone missing from her foster care placement and returned to the area of her family home. Later that day, Prada assaulted and stabbed Jordan. The girls were not known to each other previously, but Prada was understood to be linked to another young person involved in a feud with Jordan.

Jordan's family had a lengthy history of agencies' involvement following concerns involving domestic abuse, inadequate parental supervision, neglectful care of Jordan and her siblings, physical and sexual abuse, alcohol misuse by the children and parents who were also misusing alcohol and using illicit drugs. Jordan also had multiple school exclusions and educational instability, before attending an alternative educational provision 2 days per week. Jordan was eventually placed into foster care following a domestic incident where her father assaulted her and threw her out of the family home. Professionals working with Jordan and her parents, found the parents could be hostile, hard to engage in interventions, and unhelpful when Jordan absconded from her foster care placements.

Prada became known to agencies due to concerns over her behaviour, violent outbursts, and missing episodes. Prada was reported to use drugs and would steal to fund her drug use and pay associated debts. She was identified as being at risk of sexual exploitation and was thought to be friends with others associated to local gangs. Concerns grew for Prada's mental health and she was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and began prescription medication to help with her aggressive behaviour. Prada had good attendance at her primary school until her final year when she was excluded for refusing to follow instructions and absconding. Similar issues continued when trying to engage Prada in secondary education and she was permanently excluded. Prada went on to attend an alternative education provision and this placement was initially positive and Prada engaged well. Sadly, the placement broke down which had a significant impact on Prada's wellbeing, and she went on to be accommodated under 20 of the Children Act 1989 following a violent outburst in the family home where she caused significant damage and her parents became unable to manage her behaviour.

What we have learned...

Early assessment, early help and intervention are critical to avoiding later problems for children who live with daily adversity in their home lives and where there are multiple children living in the same household. Parental disengagement in early help offers should be viewed as a potential risk indicator rather than an informed and consensual decision made by the parents.

Learning for Practice: *Engaging parents at an early stage when concerns are identified is critical to identifying, assessing and targeting support. It is more effective to provide early help when problems are first noticed than to intervene later. When parents resist engagement with available support for an adolescent child, yet concerns do not diminish but simmer, and there are multiple other younger children in a household, there is value in assessing risk from a holistic and multi-agency perspective. The use of combined multi-agency chronologies to identify patterns is a useful tool to begin mapping and assessing risk.*

Children who have complex histories, and struggle to regulate their emotions and behaviours are more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and exposure to drugs, alcohol and criminality unless diverted away.

Learning for Practice: *The professional network that surrounds such children needs to think, and work, as a collective and dynamic strategic unit in order to remain alert to shifting risks and dangers.*



Lessons Learned (cont.)

What we have learnt (contd.)....

Stability of care placements and forming meaningful and lasting relationships with young people can be influential, protective and ultimately make a lasting difference.

Learning for Practice: *The importance of building and maintaining relationships with children and young people should never be under-estimated. There is considerable research supporting this view, with it providing opportunities for earlier intervention and prevention, plus more effective interventions during times of crisis. Promoting the resilience of young people and strengthening the protective factors around them are important aspects of prevention. Building resilience requires internal capacity but also external influencers. By providing targeted support at the earliest stage, it can promote resilience. This means that ‘... children and young people must be enabled to establish and maintain trusting relationships with key adults, and these should not be fragmented through organisational structures or processes ...’*

Many professionals reported to not have had sufficient information passed to them from previous professionals/services when taking over the care or support needs for Prada and Jordan. This resulted in those working with Prada and Jordan to have an incomplete picture of their respective histories and the need to ‘start all over again’ to assess what support needed to be put in place for each child.

Learning for Practice: *Background information should always be provided, or sought if not provided, about a child prior to a child being admitted on to the school roll, from service to service, team to team or professional to professional.*

Complexity – based on considerable pre-disposing and situational risk factors for each child - makes it harder for professionals to understand cause and effect, predict events and exercise control.

Learning for Practice: *To manage this complexity, it is important that the professional network operates strategically rather than a collective effort of isolated interventions. Disentangling these complex factors as part of any ongoing assessment activity is a critical task to understanding and planning how to then better target intervention. Sharing and mapping information and intelligence in a timely, coordinated and systematic way will help professionals work with the complexity.*

What do I need to do....

Advice for professionals

1. Familiarise yourself with the [West Midlands Child Protection Procedures](#), particularly [Warwickshire’s Missing pathway and tools](#) and [2.1 Children affected by Exploitation and Trafficking \(including Gangs\)](#) in relation to this review.
2. If you are not in agreement with a course of action being taken in relation to the safeguarding of a child, don’t be afraid to use Warwickshire Safeguarding’s [Escalation Protocol](#) to resolve professional disagreements.

Advice for communities

1. Some children with special educational needs and disabilities may need support from social care. If you would like further information, please contact [Warwickshire’s Family Information Service](#).
2. Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility. If you are worried a child is at risk of abuse or neglect, contact [Warwickshire’s Children & Families Front Door](#) to report your concerns.