



Serious Case Review – Learning Summary
Jersey Safeguarding Partnership Board: Children

Susan

Susan is a pseudonym in order to protect the individual's identity

Independent Reviewer: Kevin Ball

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Synopsis of the case and review

The statutory review examined the involvement of agencies and services with a child, who for the purposes of this review will be known as Susan. The Partnership Board was interested in examining a number of areas which included opportunities for assessment and intervention, thresholds, health care and educational support, and multi-agency working. A thorough and systematic review was undertaken, led by an experienced Independent Reviewer – Kevin Ball. Those that had worked with Susan were given the opportunity to contribute. A Review Panel was established to support the smooth and timely completion of the review and comprised of representatives from key agencies involved with Susan. The Review Panel benefitted from being Chaired by a senior agency leader based on the island. The review began in June 2021 and concluded in December 2021. Susan and her mother have contributed to the review

In 2020 Susan had suicidal thoughts and was noticed to have previously self-harmed. This acute episode was responded to by professionals but Susan reported not wanting to go home, having a poor relationship with her mother and that her mother's emotional/mental health was unstable. Professionals observed Susan to be constantly on her mobile phone and heavily influenced by her friends. Susan's worrying behaviours persisted into the following year. Children's Social Care became involved, and Susan was known to have been associating with a group of young people known to the Police and other agencies due to criminality, self-harming and anti-social behaviour. Susan was then also involved in a serious incident; again, she was heavily influenced by her peers not to cooperate with statutory agencies but was offered support - however this was declined. Susan continued to be involved with a group of youths, causing nuisance, becoming intoxicated, and taking drugs. Susan was permanently excluded from her school and the combined impact of Covid-19 restrictions complicated her situation, school stability and family life.

Summary of local learning identified as a result of the review

Risks to Susan steadily increased culminating in her attending A&E. Whilst Susan's immediate safety and welfare was safeguarded, the professional response could have been stronger by a more holistic exploration and understanding of the risks she faced, and how these might have been remedied. Learning has identified the need to be proportionate and considerate of the views of the child as well as the views of the responsible parent.

Susan was then involved in a serious and harmful incident; the professional response was not coordinated, did not follow the agreed procedural route, and resulted in too many professionals trying to offer her support. As a consequence, Susan chose to engage on her terms, at a much later date.

The review has captured the importance of professionals working together to agree a strategy for responding to acute incidents involving children. It has also identified that threats to young people from within the community need a coordinated and concerted effort to tackle them.

The impact of Covid-19 restrictions does appear to have been a contributory factor to some aspects of events as they occurred.

Specific learning points about the assessment and response to identified needs, vulnerability and risks.

Adopting a relationship-based approach when working with young people but also their parents is important, not only for dealing with the immediate and presenting issue, but also longer term working and support. Explaining, and keeping everyone informed of what is happening, and maintaining open communication are important aspects of working with distress and emotionally charged situations.

Providing young people with a key worker, at times of acute need or distress can be hugely influential and impactful going forward. They are there to work in partnership with families, form a trusting relationship, identify the strengths and needs of family members, enable and empower and act as a central point of contact for a family but these functions will also, at times, be undertaken by other professionals or members of the family.

Assessing and reducing community-based risks, and those factors which may appear to pull young people towards risky behaviours needs the contribution of all agencies from the Partnership, and requires coordination, collaboration and the sensitive use of local intelligence from law enforcement agencies but also from within the community itself. It creates a wider base of support for changing norms, values and can galvanise local change.

Exclusion from school is a known risk factor for children and young people, often resulting in poorer outcomes. Timely sharing of information between relevant agencies may be a useful step to assessing need or risk to a child or young person. It is important that suspension and exclusion processes

are clear to all island schools in order that there is clarity for children, parents and the wider school community.

Specific learning points about the immediate response to harm and risk.

Gaining appropriate consents, based on an assessment of capacity to give consent, is important. Consent may relate to different issues i.e., information gathering, information sharing, treatment. Where multiple professionals are involved with a child following an incident, consideration should

In cases where actual or likely harm has been identified, and which result in multiple agencies or professionals becoming involved, it is worth considering whether the child or family would benefit from one professional that can act as a single point of contact or advocate, in order to reduce the burden but also maximise the opportunity to achieve a better outcome. This may be a designated key worker who engages with the child.

be given to reducing the burden on the child or family, and not over-whelming them with multiple requests for the same issues.

Where there is uncertainty about which procedure or pathway to follow, in response to a concern raised about harm to a child, there is always merit in having an initial discussion with other professionals that would ordinarily be

involved in providing services or assessment activity. An early discussion, to agree the next step, may prove worthwhile in order to avoid later problems. Having these early discussions relies on good local networks and relationships, rather than silo based working cultures.

As well as actions identified by each agency that contributed, the review concluded with 5 recommendations for the Partnership to strengthen and improve working arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.