

## Case study CS10\_NTS10 - Young person at risk of child criminal exploitation

This case study describes how Contextual Safeguarding has influenced local systems and practice to improve the lives of young people experiencing or at risk of extra-familial harm. Names and some details have been changed to preserve young people's anonymity.

### What was the issue?

Daniel (aged 15) lived with his aunt who had requested additional support from an early help team within children's services. Daniel was not in regular education and had incidents of going missing from home. Daniel and his aunt raised significant concerns for their safety following a series of threatening incidents. Their home had become a target by adults of concern that had been exploiting Daniel into drug-related activity. Later, Daniel came to the attention of the Youth Justice Service and received a court order relating to selling illegal substances and possession of an offensive weapon. The community policing problem-solving team identified connections with Daniel and adults of concern who were maintaining a presence in the community. Daniel was also linked with other young people who were known to be of risk of child criminal exploitation (CCE), specifically traveling across the country via rail due to county lines activity.

These associations raised concern that Daniel could join them and be a target for further exploitation.

### What was the response?

Daniel was referred to a specialist exploitation team that were piloting Contextual Safeguarding (CS) approaches within a youth justice service. A coordinated multi-agency response involved:

- The team engaged in direct work with Daniel and his aunt to gain their insight into their experiences and concerns. This helped formulate a plan to help secure their safety at home.
- Links were made to the housing department, to help assess options and bring the issue to their attention should relocation be required. Discussion with family about options of relocation.
- Community with the school to raise awareness of the risks for Daniel in the community and travelling to school. Transport was arranged to and from school and key staff were kept aware of his movements.
- Partnership work with forensic child and adolescent mental health services (FCAMHS) and to gain expertise on how best to support Daniel and begin to make him feel safe.
- The team worked with the council and community policing to increase the physical safety in and around the home. This included a panic alarm and street CCTV turned to face property. This work included refurbishment and decorating to increase Daniel's comfort at home.
- The community police problem solving team increased their presence around Daniel's home.
- Daniel's details were shared with the British Transport Police as a measure to prevent exploitation for county lines activity.
- Daniel's aunt had linked contacts to report any missing episodes and any suspicious activity around the home (e.g. unknown cars, people of concern).
- Ongoing direct work with Daniel and his aunt from the specialist team involved supporting them to understand the risks and signs associated with missing and exploitation.
- The team contacted Daniel's aunt and extended family members to discuss the issues and to identify ways the family could be supported.
- Regular multi-agency meetings to review and continue to monitor the extra-familial risks for Daniel. This included reviews of the safety plan, police intelligence and peer mapping.

## What were the challenges?

The restrictions in response to the Covid-19 pandemic meant a family group conference could not be held. This was replaced with phonecalls with Daniel's aunt and extended family members. There was missed opportunity to respond to the early indications that Daniel vulnerable to CCE as there were no processes in place for the early help team to identify and assess these extra-familial risks. The specialist team had no access to a detached team of youth workers that could have provided mentorship for Daniel and worked with his young peers for preventative work around risk reduction.

## What difference did this make?

The team were able to build trusting relationships with both Daniel and his aunt and they expressed confidence in the service. Their collective views and experiences informed the safety plan and response. Daniel shared a close bond with his aunt and expressed he wanted to stay with her. The team's coordinated approach to secure the safety of both Daniel and his aunt meant a relocation was not needed. Daniel's aunt was able to continue to draw on the support of the community network. The contact with Daniel's extended family rebuilt the support network for them both and provided respite for his aunt at times of need. Practitioners engaged in beneficial work with Daniel's aunt on recognising the signs of exploitation and alerting professionals when needed. If any changes in behaviours (such as going missing) were reported, the team were able to assess potential links to CCE.

Consultation with FCAMHS highlighted the need to recognise Daniel's family chronology, trauma and develop his sense of safety. From there, a programme of youth mentoring and education around exploitation would begin. It was recognised that school as a place of safety for Daniel. The team were able to harness the good relationships Daniel and his aunt had with key school staff to implement a safety plan; his attendance therefore increased. Multi-agency meetings helped establish the collective role to safeguard Daniel and provided opportunity for ongoing review of the plan and monitoring of contextual risks. Peer mapping identified that Daniel's peer was at risk of CCE, leading to preventative and supportive work between the young people and families.

## What did we learn?

Daniel's case highlighted the need to closely involve young people alongside their parents or guardians, and ensure their voice informs any safety plan. Daniel and his aunt did not want to leave their home and community, despite the presenting risks. This case stressed the importance of not defaulting to relocation and the value of specialist teams utilising contextual safeguarding approaches to help secure safety for young people within their community. Tailoring a programme of direct educative work alongside positive activities with young people has value. However, this work needs to proceed when the young person is ready.