

Case Study: Effective Practitioner in Protecting Children

Emma has three children, Marcus, 12, Caitlyn, 8 and Bea is 3. Emma is currently in a relationship with Bea's father Drew but there are concerns of domestic violence and he lives between the family home and his mother's address. A month ago the police were called to the address because Emma was 'high' on drink and drugs and Drew had assaulted her. All three children were in the family home and this was the third occasion of Domestic Violence in the last month. Both schools and the nursery have submitted 4 referrals in the last 3 months due to concerns regarding the children's care and appearance, a disclosure by Bea that 'dad thumps mammy', Emma's chaotic lifestyle and management of the children and her attending school for a performance under the influence of substances.

Emma is 30 years old, she was made to leave the family home at 15 because she was misusing drugs and going missing and her parents were worried about the effects on her younger sister phoebe (now 22). Emma spent most of her late teens in care homes and assisted living addresses. At 18 she met Marcus and Caitlyn's father Ray who was 23 years old (now 35) and 'settled down', moving in with his parents in a secure and stable environment for both children. At 25, Emma and Ray separated because Emma began drinking and using substances again. Ray is a significant support and has shared care of his children at weekends as he works away during the week and his parents are too old to provide day to day care of the children. Emma's parents provide sporadic support for the children when Emma rings them to say she is not coping but they do not wish to engage with the child protection process and offer full time support for the family. Emma has a poor attachment with her parents and sibling, she is immature for her age and suffers from anxiety and low mood. She relies heavily on Marcus in support of the younger children. Emma met Drew at 27 and has had an on-off relationship for the last year when the violence between them has increased significantly.

Marcus is 12 years old, up until a year ago he was doing well in school and achieving his milestones. In this last year he has become 'moody, angrier and more introverted in school'. He regularly misses first and last lessons of school and comes in wearing dirty and worn uniform. He is fiercely protective of his mother and will not talk about home life. He has recently been in trouble for buying/selling cigarettes on school site and you believe he has brought alcohol on to the premises although you can not prove it. In the last 6 months his progress has dipped and his attitude to learning has changed. He is often seen in school looking vacant and tired. In his peer group he very much just 'fits in' with little fuss or challenge. In lessons he enjoys like science and maths he can become quite animated and shows real interest but for the rest of time in school he 'blends in' only showing a level of dominance/anger over new teachers/peers and situations that are out of his control.

Caitlyn is 8 years old and is a fun loving extrovert. She continues to achieve in school, meeting her targets and expected levels of progress. However in the last year she has become visibly more emotional. She regularly seeks out members of staff who she knows well for hugs or reassurance. She also doubts her ability and before participating in anything says she cant do it, needing support to try it. She frequently falls out with her friendship group over the smallest thing and finds it difficult to resolve issues on her own. She

constantly feels she is not liked or loved by people and then creates further issues with her friends by trying to give them gifts or show them affection if she feels they are upset with her. Caitlyn idolises her brother Marcus but constantly tells staff he doesn't have time for her anymore and sits in his room on his computer most nights. Caitlyn has asthma and regularly attends school without her inhaler or an inhaler which has expired. Caitlyn also wears glasses and attends school without them. Caitlyn's life appears chaotic, she often attends school late and tired, without her uniform and her uniform is dirty, stained and has holes in it. She often smells of 'dirt and sweat' which is impacting on her peer relationships. Caitlyn has tooth decay and Emma has been informed to take her to the dentist by school on three occasions. Caitlyn was very upset recently when Emma attended the school under the influence of alcohol and was asked to leave the school performance.

Bea is three years old and has attended nursery for a year on a funded placement she will begin her nursery year in September and will be 4 the following March. Bea is an immature three year old and has poor social skills. She has difficulty in forming full sentences but often uses swear words. Bea will take toys and anything she wants from other children and shows no empathy including hitting or biting children to get what she wants. Due to her needs she has one to one support for part of her timetable in nursery. She repeats verbally and physically what she sees at home, including the recent disclosure of 'daddy thumps mammy'. She shows no real attachment to her mother Emma, preferring her father Drew and brother Marcus. Emma has told nursery that Bea hits and kicks her in the family home. Bea is not toilet trained and regularly wets or poos herself. She eats with her hands and will not hold a knife and fork.

Drew is Emma's current on/off partner. He has a history of violence with all previous partners and an older son (12) to a previous partner who he has no access to. Although together for three years in the last year the violence with Emma has escalated and Drew is frustrated with her drink and drug misuse. Drew has a history of mental health concerns and had a very difficult childhood. He was brought up in a care home from aged 13 after being removed from his parents care for neglect and physical violence from his father. Drew has never harmed the children but has no understanding of the impact of domestic violence on his children. He blames Bea's violent behaviour at home and nursery on Emma because of her drink and drug misuse and how Emma behaves when she is under the influence.

Ray is Emma's ex partner and was a stable factor in her and the children's life for a long time. Ray works away and tries to see the children as often as he can. He has a partner Mandy whom he lives with and her two children Becky and Debbie who are 16 and 14. Marcus and Caitlyn get on well with them when they stay with Ray at weekends. Rays parents are in their 70's and are not able to care for the children regularly.