

Learning Report – Joan, Kate and Laura



What were the circumstances that led to this SAR?

The subjects of this review are a family; the mother Joan and two daughters Kate and Laura who were 23 and 20 years of age respectively at the commencement of this review. The mother and daughters lived together in local authority housing.

Over an extended period of time, whilst Kate and Laura were both children, agencies were concerned regarding severe neglect. This neglect presented in the form of physical, educational, medical and emotional neglect.

Kate and Laura were the subject of a number of interventions to support them, including child in need plans, child protection and ultimately legal proceedings, which started just before the children's 18th birthdays. Despite these interventions there was little sustained improvement. The family had to move addresses due to the poor condition of their home.

Joan, the mother suffered from depression and there was cause for concern regarding her mental health, her mental capacity and her ability to effectively care for the girls. These areas were not appropriately assessed.

Kate has a learning disability and more latterly was diagnosed with autism. Laura was diagnosed with epilepsy and had to take on a significant caring role within the family as both a child and young adult.

What was the nature of the abuse?

On transition to adulthood both Kate and Laura presented with serious self-neglect, as indeed did their mother Joan. The self-neglect was a continuance of the behaviours the family had demonstrated over a period of years and amounted to personal and environmental neglect, which was impacting on their physical and mental health.

What should you do?

If you are working with children where there is significant neglect as they approach adulthood, you should seek to understand what the root causes of the neglect are:

- has the parents or carers mental capacity and parenting ability been assessed?
- Has the young person's mental capacity been assessed and has a timely referral been made to appropriate adult services to allow a smooth transition?

If you are working with young adults who present with self-neglect, seek to understand what the history/experiences of the young person was as a child. What interventions had been put in place? What worked/did not work? What were the adverse childhood experiences and how may they impact on the young person into adulthood?

Learning identified	What will help?
That neglect is appropriately addressed within children	That interventions are timely and do not drift. To be assured that positive change is sustained and where it is not, there is suitable escalation, including consideration of legal proceedings in relation to parents/carers.
That the root causes of neglect are explored.	Understand the mental capacity, mental health and parenting ability of parents and carers by timely and effective assessment. Involve all agencies to address the neglect. Use the guidance and tools available to assist you ¹
That there is a smooth transition of children suffering neglect into adulthood, particularly those on child protection plan at the point of transition.	Ensure that there are timely referrals into the appropriate adult services Understand whether the young person has care and support needs within the terms of the Care Act 2014 and if not, what is the plan.
Understanding self-neglect	Where self-neglect presents, particularly in a young person, understand what their history is, have there been concerns when they were a child and if so what was done? Consider their own mental capacity and the mental capacity of any parent or previous carer who may still have influence. ² Use the guidance and tools available to assist you ³
Use of advocates	Consider whether the person needs an advocate and if they do how this can be achieved.
Carers assessments	Where we identify a person is in a caring role consider an assessment of that role to ensure that the right support is available to them and in turn the person being cared for.

¹ Worcestershire neglect guidance and tools - [Worcestershire neglect guidance and tools](#)

² Worcestershire Mental Capacity toolkit - [Worcestershire Mental Capacity toolkit](#)

³ Worcestershire Self neglect guidance - [Worcestershire Self neglect guidance](#)