

Recurrent Care Proceedings Change Project

Workshop 3

Case Study 1 Tina

Childhood

Tina's father has a long term diagnosis of schizophrenia and served a prison sentence in his late teens for sexually assaulting a child. Tina's mother has a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder. Tina's father is 20 years older than her mother and they met after his release.

Tina is one of six children. Her elder three siblings spent a period of time in local authority care before Tina was born but were returned home. Tina's mother left the family home when Tina was 8 and Tina did not have any further contact with her. Tina describes how her mother went shopping and did not come back and that her father found a note saying she wasn't coming back. Tina stayed in her father's care but there was ongoing involvement by children's social care due to her father's mental health and alcohol use and the physical and emotional neglect of the children. The home conditions were very poor. Following her mother's departure Tina had a lot of caring responsibilities for her two younger siblings. Tina was on a child protection plan for a number of years due to concerns regarding her school attendance and ongoing neglect. Eventually Tina was taken into care aged 13.

Tina struggled to fit into the residential placement. Staff described her as withdrawn. She was regularly picked on by other children and this led to her further withdrawal from any group activities. Tina had contact with her father and said she wanted to return home but children's social care would not agree to this because of her father's increasing alcohol use and the poor home conditions and so she remained in care. At 15 Tina was referred to CAMHS because of concerns regarding her self-harming behaviour. When she was 16, following several 'missing from care' episodes, Tina moved to live in a hostel.

Motherhood

When she was 17 Tina met her partner Harry. They got married within four months of meeting and Tina quickly became pregnant. Harry is 22 years older than Tina

Children's social care (CSC) became involved following a referral from the midwife. A pre-birth assessment began at 28 weeks. There were particular concerns about Harry, who was known to CSC following reports of domestic violence between him and his ex-partner who had three children. There was also an allegation of rape from a 13 year old girl – the friend of his ex-partner's daughter. There was police involvement but it did not go to court.

There were also concerns about Harry's cannabis use. Neither Tina nor Harry considered cannabis to be a drug and did not understand why this was a problem for CSC. Although there was no evidence of violence there were concerns about how Tina was controlled by Harry, for example Tina appeared to make few decisions without first consulting Harry. Tina appeared to have no access to money and when asked about this she said 'Harry looks after me'. Tina was socially isolated and had little or no contact with friends or family. She said that Harry didn't like her to have friends and that he was all she needs. There were also concerns about Tina's mental health and there were signs that she was self-harming.

Tina thought the pre-birth assessment for her child had gone well but following the birth she was told that her son was not going home with her. Tina says she still doesn't understand why this decision was made as felt she had done everything CSC had asked and had been given false hope. She feels it is because she had been in care herself.

Tina's mental health deteriorated after the baby was removed and she self-harmed and developed severe problems with anxiety. She was admitted to hospital several times. She was referred by her GP for CBT but after a few sessions stopped attending. She told CSC she had attended all the sessions and was feeling much better.

Tina was pregnant again before the end of the first set of proceedings – this is a planned pregnancy. Her first child was adopted at 9 months old and Tina has letter box contact. She says she wants to write to her child but did not attend the letter box support meeting and so hasn't yet written a letter yet. Tina says she will do whatever is needed to keep the baby and when CSC raises concerns about Harry she agrees she needs to leave him. She appears committed to bringing about change.

During her assessment she seems to show some understanding of how her childhood experiences have led to some of her adult problems. However, she blames her mother for leaving the family home and 'idealises' her father somewhat. While she understands that she was neglected whilst in his care she feels he did the best he could and it was her mother's fault for leaving. Tina feels she has proved her ability to parent as she was responsible for her siblings from a young age and felt she managed well despite living in poverty.

The social worker has concerns about her minimising her father's past and her minimisation of Harry's violent past. A vulnerability assessment is undertaken and Tina is referred to a community domestic abuse service. Tina attends the first meeting but is clear that she is not a victim of any kind of abuse. She tells the worker she only attended to keep CSC happy. The worker feels Tina lacks insight into concerns regarding her partner's past and minimises issues of control and coercion that have clearly been features of their relationship. She continually

states that Harry has never been violent or abusive to her and that he is simply protecting and looking after her.

Tina has mental health screening and is referred to the adult psychiatrist for further assessment. Tina appears to welcome the referral but does not attend the appointments.

The family support worker has helped her to join a local community group where she can meet with other pregnant women in a relaxation group. Tina tells the social worker that she is enjoying the group and has made friends. However the social worker later finds out that Tina has not been attending.

Despite Tina reporting no contact with Harry, Harry has been seen by the midwife waiting for Tina following ante natal visits. The police also report a call out to the property as neighbours were concerned about shouting from the property. Tina denies Harry having been there and maintains that they have split up. Tina tells the social worker Harry has moved to a new area and that they will have no contact even after the baby is born.

There are also concerns about Tina's willingness to engage with the pregnancy. She has struggled to attend ante-natal activities as she says she is scared what might happen. When Tina is 8 months pregnant, CSC receive information that clearly indicates that Tina and Harry are still in a relationship. When confronted by the social worker Tina denies that this is the case. She later tells the midwife says that she feels she is making progress with her mental health issues but cannot cope alone and needs Harry.

Proceedings are issued at birth and the baby is placed into foster care. Tina is devastated as she feels she has made progress and she feels let down by CSC. She says that she realises she should have been honest about Harry still being in her life and wants help. She admits that she is scared of being alone, particularly at night as she is haunted by worries about what has happened to her first child and whether he is being properly cared for. She says this is when Harry comes to her flat. She is having three contact visits with her baby Scarlett 3 times week but finds separation at the end of contact very distressing and becomes very emotional.

On her last key work session she admits she is self-harming again and has begun to use cannabis regularly to help her sleep at night. It is 18 weeks into proceedings.