

7 Point Briefing: Rebecca - Learning from Practice Exploitation Case Study

Who was Rebecca?

- Rebecca was a 13 year old young person, living with a family member.
- Rebecca had experienced a number of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), including, loss, exposure to domestic abuse, substance misuse and poor parenting.
- Rebecca had struggled with managing emotions throughout her childhood and had been excluded from multiple schools.
- Rebecca's family were committed to caring for her, however had very little family support. Attempts at early Intervention of support with the family were unsuccessful and this, coupled with the increased risk and concern for Rebecca led to an Initial Child Protection Conference being convened.
- Rebecca was made subject to a Child Protection Plan due to concerns that she was regularly going missing, coming to police attention and her family were struggling to keep her safe.
- There were concerns that Rebecca was being exploited by older males in the community – regularly seen with older males when missing, known to be attending areas where exploitation was a concern, presenting as dysregulated or under the influences of substances when returning home.

What areas of good practice were highlighted?

- The social worker developed trust with the family, through respectful curiosity of identity and cultural heritage, seeing them as experts in their own lives.
- When the family were resistant to more formal Family Group Conferencing processes, the worker used informal gatherings with the family (using the same techniques) to build trust, resilience, and resource within the family network.
- Education Services developed a bespoke package to engage Rebecca, giving equal importance to pastoral and academic needs, which led to significantly improved attendance and school being her safe place, where Rebecca had trusted adults to support her.
- When Rebecca became involved in the Criminal Justice system, her social worker attended all Court hearings alongside Rebecca and the Youth Justice Officer. This enabled them to support Rebecca to understand what was going

on and be able to make positive decisions at critical (therefore potentially pivotal) moments. In this instance, the ability to agree a more suitable address for an electronic curfew enabled this to be a successful intervention.

- Restorative work was completed with Rebecca's family which helped to repair the relationship between her and Rebecca which had been affected by issues arising from exploitation.
- As professionals learned what worked with Rebecca, a multi-agency case summary was shared with all partners and saved on relevant IT systems. This helped professionals better understand her triggers, leading to better responses during crisis moments and leading to more successful outcomes.
- Strong advocacy for Rebecca, by the Social Worker, ensured all agencies were committed to the Child Protection Plan and provided services with Rebecca's needs at the centre.

What were the key learning points?

Learning Point 1: Initial attempts at Early Help intervention did not take into account cultural differences for the family which were then perceived as non-engagement. Being curious with the family around their culture and experiences enabled the worker to pinpoint gaps in understanding and experiences which had resulted in the current situation for the family and enabled a more targeted intervention.

Learning Point 2: Rebecca had experienced a high number of school moves and exclusions. When children are repeatedly excluded from education, this should be a prompt for stopping to consider why? Considering unmet or undiagnosed need rather than focussing on problematic behaviours could be central to improving outcomes.

Learning Point 3: In the initial assessment of the family, concerns were raised about their ability to care for Rebecca amidst challenges presented (deficit model) but when the worker took the time to build a relationship and deliver intervention/learning in a way that was accessible this improved their ability to care for Rebecca and strengthened the support/network.

Learning Point 4: The initial plan resulting from the assessment, although SMART, had a significant number of targets to be achieved, making it feel unachievable from the outset. To seek early engagement, this was broken down into 3 priority areas with visual aids around what we needed to see change. Instantly, the family were able to see that this was something they could engage with and achieve.

Learning Point 5: Co-production of the plan – doing to instead of doing with. By negotiating elements of the plan together and clarifying roles and responsibilities of

each partner agency, the family felt much less overwhelmed with the situation and empowered to take ownership over their own parts of the plan.

Learning Point 6: When young people are starting to come to the attention of agencies due to their behaviour (i.e. multiple exclusions, coming to attention of police, missing episodes), professionals need to consider the 'why' rather than the 'what' as this will help earlier identification of unmet need. All professionals need to be alert to the risk factors which make children vulnerable to exploitation. Earlier intervention to address these will reduce the risk of exploitation at a later stage.

Learning Point 7: All practitioners need to be alert to the signs of exploitation and understand the high level of control offenders have over young people, limiting the ability of young people to make positive choices. Where children are going missing – each and every missing episode needs to be followed up and analysed to track patterns and considered over time, not just as stand alone incidents.

Where do I go for further information?

Please visit the [CYSCP website](#) for up-to-date information and latest news. Please also sign up to the [CYSCP Newsletter](#) and follow us on Twitter @YorkSCP

Useful Links

[Child Exploitation Screening Tool](#)

[The North Yorkshire and City of York Partnership Information Sharing Form](#)

[Tackling Child Exploitation \(TCE\) Support Programme \(researchinpractice.org.uk\)](#)

[Parents Against Child Exploitation \(Pace\) UK \(paceuk.info\)](#)

[Reports and Insights | Crest Advisory](#)

<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/>