

Safeguarding Case Review of Michelle

Learning Brief



How to use this learning brief

This briefing is one of the ways in which the safeguarding partnership aims to share learning as widely as possible to support practice. Thank you for taking the time to read it and we hope you find it useful. The briefing pulls together key messages from the review and the lessons learnt to enable you and your team to reflect and challenge your thinking.

Please take time to read this brief (you can access the full report [here](#)) and consider the following questions with your colleagues:

- Does this case identify any learning for my individual practice?
- Does it help identify any training or development needs?
- Does anything need to change within my team or service to implement this learning and support best practice?

Who was Michelle?

Michelle is described by her family as a funny, loving, affectionate young woman. She had a good sense of humour, was charismatic, engaging and caring with an optimistic outlook. Michelle also had long standing mental ill health and had had social work involvement in her life from an early age. When she was a teenager, she was diagnosed with depression and paranoid schizophrenia and she spent some time in adolescent mental health units. She became a looked after child in July 2017 and then moved into semi independent provision. Michelle died in February 2019, aged 19.

What did the review look at?

The review looked at:

- The multi agency support provided to Michelle
- How young people are supported and safeguarded through their transition into adulthood,
- The effectiveness of the commissioned care provided to Michelle
- The effectiveness of Michelle's support plan/s
- Understanding how Michelle's medication was monitored in her placement.

How did we carry out the review?

We employed an independent consultant to lead the review. He looked at all the organisation's contributions and requested further information. He spoke to Michelle's family. He identified three key periods of Michelle's life and some key themes which he explored in more detail at a workshop with the people who had worked with Michelle. His report has been accepted by the safeguarding arrangements in both the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead and the West of Berkshire and the recommendations are now being acted upon.



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Key Themes and Learning Points

These are the key themes and learning points identified in the review.

The importance of commissioning suitable accommodation for young people, how young people are prepared for semi independence and the ongoing suitability of accommodation over time.

Learning Point – Finding suitable accommodation for care leavers can be difficult and there is a need for ongoing checks and balances to ensure it is still the most suitable option. This is an action for all services involved in providing support to a young person particularly children's social care and housing.

Learning Point – Young people need adequate preparation to live successfully in semi independent living. Consider the thoughts of the young person, their ability to manage and ensure there are preparations in place for them to live independently.

Learning Point – All semi independent and independent accommodation should be fully risk assessed and this should involve relevant professionals, the young person, providers/landlord, in order to ensure that the accommodation is safe and continues to meet their needs.

Recognition of the complexity of supporting a young person who reaches their 18th birthday (and therefore becomes an adult) living out of area and in receipt of multiple services.

Learning Point – All organisations need to provide a flexible transition so that support for a young person continues, based on their needs and vulnerabilities, after their 18th birthday. When young people turn 18, this can present a 'cliff edge' and professionals need to work together to avoid this happening.

Effective use of risk assessments and prevention plans.

Learning Point – Consider the use of the multi-agency risk management framework and tool working with care leavers. To view our multi-agency risk management framework tool please click [here](#)

Learning Point – Plans need to be regularly reviewed and updated in the light of the changing circumstances of the child or adult.

How children and adult local authority and health services work together to safeguard young adults, the role of the lead professional and balancing risk and safety in young adults.

Learning Point – Mental health services can appear complex both to other professionals and families. Everybody should ensure they understand the roles, responsibilities and limitations of working with different organisations.

Learning Point - A lead professional should be appointed to help a vulnerable young person to navigate their way through this complex area. For example, for a care leaver, their Personal Advisor is likely to be this person.

Ensuring that the young person is at the centre of the care planning, commissioning of places and that their views are listened to, even if they are not present at meetings with professionals.

Learning Point – There were important meetings held without Michelle being present and her views did not appear to have always been heard or even acknowledged.

Learning Point - Young people should be a part of all meetings where they are being discussed relevant to them and their care and their views must fully inform any decision making, even if they aren't present.