



A Family Approach Case Study—Samar and Meena

Samaira and her two children, Samar (10 months old) and Meena (13 years old), have just moved in to the area after moving from London after Meena's father was convicted for Domestic abuse and breaking his non molestation order against Samaira. Health Visitor went around to the home address after the family moved 6 weeks ago to carry out an initial booking on Samar when she noticed a bruise to the right side of his cheek. Health visitor was also concerned as the curtains were closed at 4pm in the afternoon, Meena was still in her pyjamas and Samar looked a bit 'grubby'. Health visitor made a telephone referral into social care and a referral was made to the police (Central Referral Unit). A joint approach was carried out and Meena was interviewed; she collaborated mother's account 'Mum caught Samar when he rolled off the sofa'. The home conditions are a little sparse and grubby, boxes are still not unpacked and mum looks tired in the social workers opinion. Mum is also drinking quite heavily with David (new boyfriend) and leaving Meena to be a young carer for her younger brother Samar. Mum is a qualified Nursery Nurse and a referral was made to the LADO as she was due to start a new job at 'Little School' in a months' time - returning back from maternity leave. Samaira's new employer was notified of the concerns. Social worker is engaging with mum in the assessment process and a decision was to support the family on a Child in Need Plan as Samaira broke down asking for help stating she feels depressed and isolated and wants to work with social care, health and get Meena into school.



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What's life like for Samar & Meena?

Samaira states she is feeling low and depressed since having Samar and fleeing many years of domestic abuse; emotional, physical, financial and coercive abuse. Samaira feels quite isolated since moving to the area away from her friends. The move to the area has put Samaira into financial difficulties and she is struggling to pay for her rent and bills as her benefits have not come through; there is very little food in the cupboards. Meena and Samar's Grandparents live in Guildford and sees them about once a month; Samaira's relationship with her parents is a bit fraught. Meena does not have any contact with her father or her extended family due to Samaira not wanting to be found by her ex-husband when he is released from prison, all contact is forbidden. Meena is unhappy she is not able to contact her paternal grandparents as he was close to her paternal grandmother and auntie, but understands her mother's wishes as she has witnessed her mother being abused by her father.

Samar does not see his father and Samaira has not put Samar's father on his birth certificate. Meena loves Samar and cares for her younger brother when her mother is intoxicated or has gone out with her new boyfriend, who she has recently met over the internet. Meena does not like her mother's new boyfriend as she does not like them drinking and Meena keeps telling her mum there is no milk or bread in the fridge. Samar does not attend any baby groups, the local children centre or nursery and the social worker is concerned Samar is not being stimulated enough as his responses are slow.



Child sexual exploitation, missing and trafficked / YOT

Meena is slowly making friends at school but the head of year is concerned she is not in school regularly and is often seen in the local park with older teenagers. A PCSO's reported they brought Meena home after finding her in the park at 11pm under the influence of substances and her mother was not aware she was out of the house. A Child in Need meeting was convened with the social worker, school, health, PCSO and mother did not turn up. Concerns were raised for Meena's safety as the school report they think she is vulnerable and she is looking tired and is coming in with a new mobile phone, an older male 18 years old is collecting her outside of school, Meena seems to be distracted and her attitude has been described by her teacher as 'care free'. The PCSO have reported Meena being out late and mother not reporting her daughter missing as she has not returned home or attended school the following day. The PCSO also report Meena attending known 'youth parties' in the area where there are concerns about CSE and where children go when they do not want to go home; substances have been found at the property with older males.



Meena is not spending so much time at home anymore, which school and the social worker are concerned about and mum is giving very little information away as her new boyfriend is always at the property when social worker attends to see Samar. Meena has been caught shop lifting several times in the shopping centre and the police are concerned she is stealing to order. Meena was brought before a Youth Panel but Meena walked out of the panel and she is now having to attend the Youth Court for non compliance. Meena was discussed at the local Youth Offending Team Triage Decision-Making Panel following a referral from Hampshire Police over the shoplifting offences. Given the offending behaviour and based on existing concerns of Social Care, Education, Health, CAMHS and Police, a Youth Conditional Caution was agreed. However by not attending Central Police station to sign for the Youth Conditional Caution, Meena failed to engage in the process and has subsequently been charged to the local Youth Court.



Legislation underpinning Practice



Samaira met David Hill on the internet. He currently lives in Ryde on the Isle of Wight and has two children who are currently in local authority care as they have disclosed sexual abuse by their father and their mother was not deemed to be a protective factor. Samaira does not know about the allegations against her new partner. The police and social care spoke to David and advised him to inform Samaira of his current situation but he refused. A disclosure was made under 'Sarah's Law' to Samaira but Samaira does not believe David sexually abused his children and strongly believes he's a nice kind man to her and her children.



Due to Samaira not believing the allegations and refusing to sign an interim safety plan, an ICPC has been convened due to other safeguarding concerns:



- Neglect



- Fleeing domestic abuse (not getting a lot of information from mum)
- Meena is missing school regularly, Samaira not informing the school
- Mum has now stopped the health visitor coming into the property
- Mum refusing to provide details of Samar's father
- CYP'S have been received after neighbours report mum being heavily intoxicated with her partner David
- PCSO's concerned they have seen Meena out late under the influence of substances.
- Concerns around CSE / missing for Meena
- Concerns for Samar's development – mum has not taken Samar for his development checkup.
- Mum not believing David has sexually abused his children
- Mum refusing to sign the safe plan



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At the ICPC, Samaira's behaviour was defensive and refused to acknowledge the risk David posed to Samar and Meena. Samaira also did not acknowledge Meena being at risk of CSE and did not have any insight into her daughter being vulnerable and stated her daughter's boyfriend was a nice man, he was caring and kind to Meena. Meena made excuses as to why she had not taken Samar for his developmental checkups. Samaira did not acknowledge her alcohol misuse and stated she was a social drinker and didn't need help or support. Mum refused to engage in the ICPC and walked out of the meeting. Samar and Meena were made subject to Child Protection Plans with the consideration of PLO meeting as soon as possible.



A PLO meeting was held with Samaira and her solicitor and she signed an interim safety plan and stated she would work with the Department and engage in services. However, the social worker saw Samaira leave with David holding his hand and weekly visits were undertaken by professionals.



A week later the social worker was called into Meena's school at Meena's request. Meena made an allegation of sexual abuse against David and Meena was jointly interviewed by police and her social worker. Meena also disclosed mother was drinking heavily with David and was frightened who would look after her younger brother Samar. David was arrested and was spoken to by police but mum called her daughter a 'liar' and stated Meena was jealous of her relationship with David.



Legal advice was sought and Meena and Samar's social worker applied to the court for an interim care order due to mum's lack of ability to care for her children in a safe environment. Unfortunately, Grandmother was on holiday and the Department was unable to get hold of her, the Judge agreed for Samar and Meena to be looked after by the local authority and supervised contact should be convened three times a week.



Samar and Meena were placed with a foster carer, Diane, to try and reduce the risk of Meena engaging in CSE by her older boyfriend. Diane was given a lot of information and Meena seemed to open up to Diane and appeared to feel relaxed in her company. Diane took Samar to baby groups which he seemed to enjoy and was showing signs of animation; smiling, gurgling, eye contact and picking up and playing toys. Meena did not want to see her mother and chose not to attend contact. Samaira attended contact and held Samar for an hour and was emotional throughout.



Meena is showing signs of challenging behaviour



Diane has reported Meena missing to the police as she has not returned back to the foster Placement after asking Meena to return home by 8pm. Diane is concerned about Meena after she was returned after being found at a party under the influence of substances and her behaviour was fairly aggressive towards Diane and her husband. Diane has also found packets of legal high drugs in Meena's bedroom when she was changing Meena's bedding. Diane is also concerned Meena is displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour towards her older son and using sexual language in the house which is unnecessary. Diane has also noticed Meena not interacting with Samar recently and is concerned about her recent change in behaviour and attitude; being disrespectful, rude, shouting at Samar and Diane and demanding money being aggressive.



Social worker has been trying to contact extended family to carry out viability assessments on: Paternal Grandparents, Meena's Father is still in Prison and social worker has contacted Paternal Grandparents Lynne (60 years old, part-time Boots shop assistant) and Phillip Harris (61 years old, full time in B&Q) they live in a 2 Bedroom Council flat.



They are not known to Social Services or Police. Their Son, Steve, is in Prison due to be released in 6 months - lots of DV with Samaira (Mum) and he has alcohol misuse.



They have come forward to care for Meena but do not want to look after Samar. They are a working class family and had regular contact with Meena when the family lived in London. Meena would often go and stay with Paternal Grandparents and she would tell them her dad would hit her mother but Grandparents would return Meena the next day and did not inform Children Social Care. The latest incident before Steve was placed on remand, he kicked the door in and assaulted mum and she was hospitalised, Meena was present in the kitchen.



Paternal Grandparents minimised their son's behaviour stating Samaira use to wind their son up and provoked him. Their son went to his parents' house after the assault and the police arrested him at their home address. Steve had a good upbringing, and achieved at school and in college. Steve (30 years old) is a qualified joiner who started his own business at the age of 21, moved out of his parents' home and met Samaira. The business folded and he started using





alcohol as a coping mechanism and then became domestically abusive towards Samaira due to suffering depression and not accessing any support. Steve has had periods of stability in his life, however when the relationship resumed with Samaira, the relationship would start being abusive and Meena would witness.



A sibling assessment is being carried out to consider whether Samar should be separated from Meena as Samar is at an age where he can be adopted as the Department still do not know who Samar's father is and Samaira has not put forward any other family or friends to look after Samar.

Permanence Planning for Meena / Adoption for Samar



Samaira has not engaged with social care throughout the court process and has not been attending supervised contact. Samaira is currently at risk of losing her tendency due to her alcohol misuse and remaining in a relationship with David. The Department considered whether Meena and Samar could return back to their mother, but unfortunately Samaira has not prioritised her children's needs above her own.



A placement order was granted for Samar to be adopted and Meena wanted to live with her paternal grandparents. The adoptive parents agreed they would make regular contact with Meena so she can see her younger brother 3 times a year.



Practice Points to Consider

Overview of Safeguarding – Samar & Meena

- Describe safeguarding thresholds are in Children's Social Care
- Devise a child protection referral to the Police
- Applying the Bruising Protocol to Samar
- Contribute to a S47 strategy meeting and processes
- Recognising the significance of using tools to talk to children – TEDS
- Understanding the LADO role and responsibilities
- Devise an outcome focused plan for Samar & Meena



What's life like in Samar & Meena's world?



- Apply child development 0-5 key stages for Samar
- Recognising the significance of using tools to engage children
- Recognise the significance of Neglect and parental factors such as domestic abuse, alcohol and substance misuse and mental ill health.
- Understand the impact of the 'Toxic-trio' upon Samar & Meena's development





Child Sexual Exploitation, missing, trafficked and Youth Offending



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- Describe child sexual exploitation, missing and trafficking
- Recognise indicators of children at risk and models of behaviour
- Use local evidence based tools to identify children at risk and be able to follow 4 LSCB procedures
- Describe some of the issues that face young people who offend
- Recognise factors that contribute to offending by a child or young person
- Describe some of the barriers to engagement young people in the youth justice system may face.
- Identify the main organisations and agencies involved in delivering youth justice
- Explain the main outcomes and sentencing options for young people
- Outline the challenges and opportunities of partnership working.
- Explain the importance of safeguarding in the context of working with young people who offend.

Legislation underpinning practice in relation to Samar & Meena

- Contribute to an initial child protection Conference
- Applying Children Act 1989, Working together & Safeguarding 2015 to Samar & Meena
- Understand the Public Law Outline – roles and responsibilities of being a social worker
- Outlining the role of a Guardian from CAFCASS
- Apply the process to a S20 Voluntary Accommodation of Samar & Meena
- Understand the court process and to develop court skills
- Understand what is capacity in relation to the mental health act

Planning for Samar & Meena

- Applying Children & Adoption Act 2006 to Samar & Meena
- Recognise models of attachment in children
- Understanding the Looked After Children framework
- Identify and role and responsibilities of a LAC Social Worker
- Recognise the importance of a role of a Foster Carer
- Understand from a Looked After Children's view point of being placed in foster care

Meena showing signs of challenging behaviour

- An overview of substance misuse: types, effects risks, how used, slang names



- Explain harmful reduction and to provide advice
- Review of Cycle of change
- Understand referral pathways and screening tools for social workers to use
- Apply guidance for using the sexual behaviours traffic light tool
- Identifying children with sexually problematic/ abusive behaviours
- Definitions of Connected Persons, viability and sibling assessments
- Applying the legal framework
- Outline the challenges of Special Guardianship and providing support to prevent a placement breakdown



Permanence planning for Meena / Adoption for Samar

- Outlining the reunification process for Samar & Meena
- Understanding Permanence planning for Meena
- Applying guidance to Placement Orders for Samar
- Evaluate life story work with Samar & Meena
- Understanding Adoption processes for Samar

