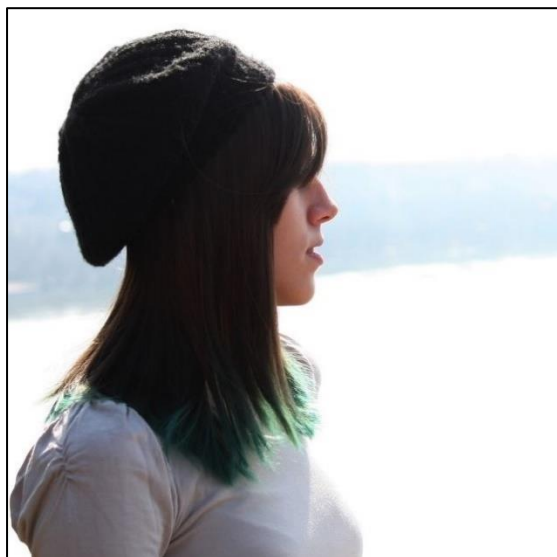


SARAH'S* STORY



I was thirteen when my mum died. She wasn't perfect but she was my mum.

About a year before she died me, my brother and sisters had to go into foster care because mum and James were always fighting. Then they split up and we got to go home again. Then they got back together and split up and got back together. I lost count and everyone else lost interest in us.

One night they had a really bad fight. they were screaming and shouting. the front door slammed and it went quiet. I went to sleep.

The next morning, we didn't wake up because the shouting had kept us awake until late. The phone ringing woke me up. I answered it; it was the school asking why my brothers and sisters weren't there. I said we were all sick, especially mum, that's why she hadn't called.

I went into mum's room to wake her up, but she wouldn't wake up. I tried and tried but nothing worked. I shouted to Simon (he's the next oldest after me) but he couldn't wake her either, so I sent him next door to see Uncle Reg.

Uncle Reg came round and he couldn't wake mum either. He asked us to go and play with the kids whilst he made a phone call. We liked Uncle Reg, so we did what he said.

Not long later an ambulance arrived. Uncle Reg told us that mum had taken an overdose and was dead.

At the start, the kids (my younger brothers and sisters) went to live with their dad. Simon and me and James when to stay with Nana Mandy, but she couldn't cope with me. I was upset of course. I was lashing out. I'd just lost my mum and James wouldn't let me and Simon see the kids. I was missing school and drinking, hanging around with older mates. I didn't want to hurt Nana. I was just so sad and angry and didn't know how else to deal with it.

It was agreed that I would have to move to my Auntie Julie's. She lived an hour away in another county. I hated that I'd be moving away from Simon and all my mates, but Nana was becoming ill, so I agreed.

SAFEGUARDING ADOLESCENTS CASE STUDY

I started my new school the following week and I instantly hated it. I hated everything about it – the way it looked, the teachers, the students, everything. So, I started causing trouble in classes and refusing to do work. Sometimes I wouldn't bother to show up.

It was around this time that I started to feel unwell, and my Auntie Julie took me to the doctors. I had to have lots of tests done and was diagnosed with a condition that meant I was going to need several operations and medication for life. It all became too much.

I started drinking more and missing more school. I went missing a few times and was brought back to auntie Julie's by the Police.

Auntie Julie had a new partner now. Her name was Sharon. She had a little girl called Maddy and they both lived with us.

I liked Sharon, she got me. She understood. She told me that her cousin had recently died by suicide and so she knew what I was going through. That felt good.

Lots of people were trying to get involved in my life now. There were doctors and nurses, teachers and pastoral workers, police, social services, CAMHS but I didn't want to talk to anyone I just wanted to be left alone. They visited my home and spoke to Auntie Julie and asked who else lived in the home.

**Pseudonym*

Questions to consider:

1. What are the protective factors for Sarah?
2. What are the risks for Sarah?