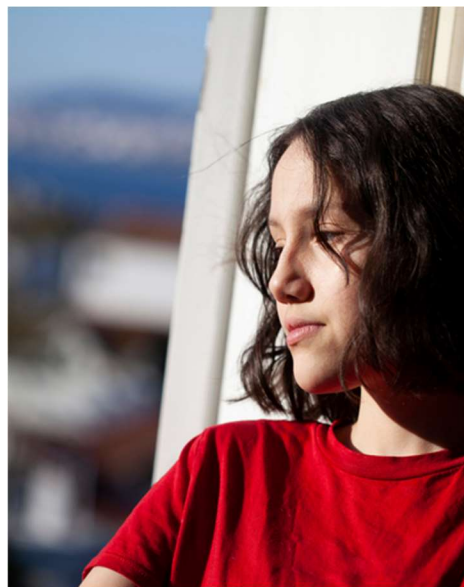## GRACIE'S* STORY

My name is Gracie, I'm 14. I live with my Mum, my older Brother, Kyle, who's 17 and my half-sister, Esme, who's seven. We have a dog, Scruff, and two cats. Mum says the house isn't ours, it belongs to the council. We have three bedrooms; one for Mum, one for Kyle and me and Esme share. Her side is always neat and tidy.

School are worried about me because I'm not there much. They keep moaning at Mum, so she moans at me. I get up late and then have to get Esme ready. I walk her to school because Mum is always too tired. When I do go to school, I get nasty comments from the other kids, like: "*you stink of BO*", "*do you know what a hairbrush is*" and "*does anyone in your house wash*". I don't have all the right stuff for lessons either, so my teachers get lairy.

I've got to see the school nurse today, but I dunno why. It something like a health assessment. I'm not bothered what it's for.

The school nurse is alright. She asked me about my life and stuff at home, like when I go to bed. School think I always look tired. I told the nurse that I go to bed at 10pm but I don't fall asleep straight away, so I watch YouTube or TikTok and send Snapchats to my friends. I'm vegetarian. Mum hasn't got the money to buy the foods I like. I eat fruit and veg when we have them, or I have to eat the dinners Mum gives us, but just leave the meat. A lot of evenings I just have bread, chips or pasta. The nurse wanted to know about that.

The nurse kept asking me questions. I saw her looking at my arms, I have scratches on them, so I hide them away by pulling down my jumper because I don't want to be judged anymore. I did tell the nurse about my tooth hurting; it's really bad, and I think I need to see a dentist, but I don't remember the last time I went.

I was sad when the school nurse asked me if I had anyone to talk to if I was worried about stuff, and I said "No". I can't talk to Mum; she's always busy with her own things; my aunty died last year, and Mum is dealing with that.

For Practitioners

1) What risk(s) can be identified at this point?
2) What actions would you take?

SAFEGUARDING ASOLESCENTS CASE STUDY

The nurse told me that she was worried and wanted to fill out a form to get some more help for us. I'm not sure Mum will be happy about that. She doesn't like social workers, she said they are too nosey and should just let people get on with life.

A police officer came to school to talk to Year 9 about being safe. I liked her. I had wanted to join the police when I left school. I felt safe, she wasn't 'judgey' or anything. I told her that sometimes Mum hits me with a hairbrush and tells me to sort my hair out. I ended up telling her about the marks on my arms. When I hear Mum and her boyfriend shouting, it reminds me of when Dad lived with us.

For Practitioners

You have been notified that a Section 17 investigation has been triggered from the Inter-Agency Referral Form submitted by the school nurse and a social worker has been allocated to complete an assessment.

The social worker has tried, on many occasions, to contact Mum but has not had any success. An unannounced home visit was completed which has raised further concerns; Mum answered the front door and appeared disorientated, possibly under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Mum let the social worker in, reluctantly, where multiple takeaway containers were seen about the front room and large amounts of rubbish bags in the kitchen. The pet's bowls did not have any food or water in them and lots of empty alcohol bottles were scattered around and possibly some drug paraphernalia (which Mum said was her boyfriends).

The social worker spoke to the children individually and in private; Kyle reported to not be at home very much as he would rather be out with his girlfriend. Kyle attends college where he is working through his NVQ for Engineering.

Esme, who is seven years old, said she was happy but was happier when Daddy was home. Esme said she likes school and has lots of friends. Esme showed the social worker her bedroom; one side was tidy, bed made with clean, appropriate bedding and a scattering of soft cuddly toys. But the other side of the room was untidy with rubbish, dog or cat faeces trodden in the carpet, the bed was unmade, and the bedding was visibly dirty. Esme was very proud in telling the social worker that the clean side is hers because Mummy does it for her.

Gracie told the social worker that she could not remember the last time her bedding was changed, it was her responsibility to keep it clean as she was 14 years old. Gracie went on to say that she wants to help her Mum but doesn't know how. Mum also cries a lot, especially during the week, when she is not out with her boyfriend. At weekends Gracie said she looks after Esme when Mum and her boyfriend go out.

The social worker, as part of her assessment, asked Mum for her boyfriend's name, but Mum would not provide it.

SAFEGUARDING ASOLESCENTS CASE STUDY

Information from the Strategy Discussion in MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) highlighted that Mum was a victim of domestic abuse in a previous relationship which had been discussed at HRDA (High Risk Domestic Abuse meetings) and MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference). There are two accounts of verbal only domestic incidences with a man called Pete, who is logged as Mum's new partner.

> 1) Who else could Gracie, Esme or Kyle be referred to?
> 2) Are there any other agencies who you need to liaise with?
> 3) How can the progress of the plan be monitored and/or escalating if necessary?

A joint Section 47 investigation with Police and Children's Social Care was instigated and the recommendation of the family going to Initial Child Protection Conference.

At the Conference, it was decided that the children should be made subject to Child Protection Planning, under the category of neglect, with the plan including a welfare-based assessment to be completed.

> **Discussion point:** If the Child Protection Plan is not moving forward and the actions are not being met, what do you think should happen next?

*Pseudonym