

**PLYMOUTH SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP**

**Serious Case Review Learning: Child WR**

The following case is a Plymouth Serious Case Review published in 2020. The case relates to Child WR, a secondary school age male, and the following tells his experiences through services.

**Case Summary** : Child WR lived with his maternal grandparents. He had lived with them since he was a very young child. His birth mother struggled to care for him as she tried to cope with her own alcohol issues and had no further involvement in his upbringing once he went to live with his grandparents.

Child WR’s grandparents provided a secure, loving and nurturing home. He was part of a large extended family with other children living in the household. He had an older sibling who he had a very close relationship with.

WR attended special schools for all of his school life and was diagnosed with attention deficit disorder, autistic spectrum disorder, foetal alcohol syndrome and mild learning disability. Those who knew WR described him as highly volatile and impulsive. The main worries for school and grandparents were WRs impulsivity and his lack of awareness of consequences.

WR enjoyed school and was well liked by his teachers. He could also be loving and caring towards his family and wanted to be helpful to his grandparents. He had a circle of friends in school and the community.

WR would often go missing i.e. in a three year period he was reported missing nearly 50 times. Police received a significant level of concerns about WR from a young age mainly involving low level theft, anti-social behaviour and being found with adults known to be a risk because of their own links to drug use and sexual offending.

Following a police investigation Child WR was convicted for sexual assaults on a number of much younger children. The chronology below details the sequence of harmful sexual behaviour incidents. Dates and ages have not been included to support anonymity.

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| **Chronology of Harmful Sexual Behaviour Incidents** | |
| First Incident | The first allegation of a sexual offence relates to Child WR attempting to sexually assault a boy under 13 but was stopped by the victim’s older sibling. This incident was unknown to services at the time. The parents of the victim were new to the area and were persuaded not to report the incident to the police by neighbours who were aware of WRs disabilities and vulnerabilities. The family later came forward at the time of the fifth incident once they were aware assaults on another child had taken place. |
| Second Incident (3 years later) | Inappropriate sexual behaviour between WR and a same aged peer from school. The school and grandparents were aware of the incident, it was felt to be consensual and so no further action taken. |
| Third Offence (3 months after the second incident) | Child WR is an open case to children’s social care because of the worries around his missing episodes and being beyond the control and influence of his grandparents. During the multi-agency planning and assessing Child WR is reported to police for a sexual assault on a much younger child.  A strategy meeting had already been arranged to discuss the wider concerns for WR. This third incident was discussed in the strategy meeting. The strategy meeting concluded that Child WR needed extra support and was not considered to be at risk of significant harm. A number of safety factors were identified for Child WR including his grandparents, Youth Offending Team Support and the NSPCC attended the strategy meeting to provide expertise to the decision making regarding the future assessment of any on-going risk of further sexual assault.  The strategy meeting was reviewed 3 weeks later and decided again that WR did not meet the threshold of significant harm and was to be supported on a child in need basis.  Child WR was interviewed by the police for the third incident and admitted the assault. He couldn’t explain why he did it but did say he had seen other adults acting in a similar way in public. Child WR apologised for what he did and recognised it was wrong.  A police decision was reached to manage the incident by way of a caution. The victim’s family disagreed with this decision and the case was referred to a senior police officer and the crown prosecution service to decide if a caution could be given.  A file was sent to the crown prosecution service two months after the third incident took place. A further three months later the crown prosecution service requested more information from children’s social care about the work being undertaken before deciding if a caution was appropriate. |
| Fourth Incident (5 months after third incident) | A few days before the crown prosecution service requested additional information Child WR sexually assaulted another much younger child. The incident took place at a local leisure centre. The victim was a member of a family who had befriended WR because he was a classmate of one of their other children. The assault was not known about or reported at the time. |
| Fifth & Final Incident (Two weeks after the fourth incident) | Child WR joined the same family described in the fourth incident for an outing. During the outing it was noticed that he had disappeared with the same much younger child. WR was found nearby committing a sexual assault on the child and ran away after being discovered.  Child WR was later arrested and admitted to sexual offences against the child. |

**What for you is the learning that can be gathered from this case?**

**How would you apply this learning in your practice/agency?**

**What questions are you left with?**