



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

Priority Families - case study

Background

Ethnicity Polish/Roma.

Mrs Y is a single parent of six children between the ages of 9yrs – 19yrs old. There has been social care involvement since 2011.

Mrs Y came to England from Poland in 2009 with her husband and their six children, however they are no longer in a relationship due to domestic violence and the father has since returned to Poland.

Any complex conversations require an interpreter as Mrs Y has very limited English, the children's is slightly better.

Initial concerns were that the young females in the household were involved in drug dealing and sexual exploitation. Prior to the IFSW's involvement the girls were under a sexual exploitation strategy, and there was very little engagement between the family and Social care.

It was believed that Mrs Y was associating with people who are supposedly participants in fraud and linked to the Polish Mafia and the family had also been evicted from their last two properties due to the damage to the property and anti social behaviour linked to people frequenting the home at various times of day and night.

In the community the family had been known for "making trouble" and were reported to being loud and disrespectful, causing intentional damage to other properties and cars and stealing bikes. The children's names were also heard in the community with regard to being involved with individuals for drug dealing and anti-social behaviour.

Mrs Y has received a one year supervision order which requires her to attend the probation service for the children's non attendance at school. She has been informed that if she appears before the court again due to her children not attending school then she will be given an 8 week custodial sentence and this would have a major impact on the whole family and consequently the children would have to be placed into alternative care.

Prior to the case being allocated to an Intensive Family Support Worker (IFSW) it had been noted in the CAF that **all** professionals involved had been unable to achieve change due to lack of engagement.

Measuring impact

When the IFSW was allocated to the family, the school attendance of all children was virtually non-existent, with the children only attending on the 'odd' occasions. The IFSW was **persistent** and made several early morning visits to ensure they are all up and ready for school and helped the family to apply for funds to purchase new school uniforms as this was one of the barriers which contributed to their non-attendance.

The children are now beginning to attend more regularly, and this has prevented any further legal action being taken towards Mrs Y. IFSW has

Mrs Y's tenancy was at risk and she was served a notice of 'intention to seek possession' due to her ever increasing rent arrears which she had previously agreed she would pay small amounts back but wasn't doing so. To make the situation worse her housing benefit had been suspended, because Mrs Y had been working temporarily and claiming 'out of work' benefits at the same time which she had not informed the job centre about a change in her circumstances.

The IFSW took a **challenging approach** with Mrs P and made the consequences very clear that if she did not come to an agreement with the letting agent to address her rent arrears, she was at real risk of losing her home, and explained how this would impact on her and the children. Furthermore Mrs P was **challenged** about working and claiming job seeker allowance, this meant changing Mrs P's 'mind set' to ensure that she understood the consequences as her initial response was 'everybody else works and claims Job seeker allowance'.

The IFSW was **assertive** and immediately organised a meeting with housing, the letting agent, an interpreter and Mrs Y to ensure the housing benefit department had all the relevant documents required and requested that Mrs Y's housing benefit application was to be fast tracked to prevent the situation escalating.

Solution focused

The lack of engagement Mrs Y had with Social Care was one of the major obstacles which had prevented workers to understand the dynamic, history, cultural and current situation.

The IFSW ensured that the family understood that she was not going to give up due to non engagement, the persistent knocking on the front door and phone calling enabled the family to understand that the IFSW is **persistent** and would not give up easily.

When the IFSW was able to get access to the house it was important to take on a solution focused approach to encourage the family to move forward. The focus was to ask each member of the family what they wanted to change and how this could be achieved.

The approach was to focus on the present and only look back on the past in order to activate conversations about resources and past successes.

With the support of an interpreter the IFSW completed one to one work with Mrs. Y and her children to understand their life story both in the UK and in Poland this work revealed that the children had been in care for one and half years in Poland due to domestic violence and the youngest child falling out of an upstairs window. Mrs. Y has found it difficult to put in place rules and boundaries for the children as she had been feeling guilty that her children were put in care. With the help of an interpreter Mrs. Y stated during a one to one session that she herself was an adopted child and discussed the difficulties of this for her and how this had impacted on her life. Knowing and understanding the background to this family has helped the IFSW find a better way of approaching the challenges faced within the family and it has also helped other agencies to understand why the family had previously resisted social care involvement.

The importance of assisting agencies such as school, probation, police, health and housing to take a different outlook on the family was key to making 'positive progress'. The IFSW had to assertively help other agencies to move from a problem focused approach to a more solution focused, be able to negotiate clear outcomes with the family, and be able to utilize more of the strengths and resources from the family as a whole.

Cost Avoidance

Due to Mrs Y's engagement with the IFSW the following costs have been avoided:

Cost associated with evicting and re-housing the family this could have included:

- Cost of accommodating the whole family in a B&B accommodation
- Cost of food vouchers
- Associated cost to organisations including Housing, CYP

Costs associated with an eight week custodial sentence due to failing to send her children to school this could have included:

- Cost of her being in prison
- Cost of the children being placed in care
- Associated cost to organisations including Probation, CYP, Housing