



Domestic abuse scenario - care setting

DSL Information Sheet

Questions for the DSL to facilitate a discussion:

- Is there reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect? In what way?
- How might this be dealt with?
- Who needs to be involved ?

Analysis

- Briony is a young person who has additional needs. Her early life experiences also need to be taken into consideration as we know that neglect in early childhood can impact on a child's development and understanding of relationships.
- That Briony has done well since being your care is a positive, and that she is in a position to have a relationship with another person is also positive. We need to understand what Briony's experience of the relationship is, and what her understanding of a mutual, respectful relationship is. Is Briony accepting everything that she is told because she sees this as the first real relationship that she has had? Is she worried that if she says what is happening care staff and social workers will step in and control who she can and cannot see?
- What is the impact for Briony of this being a same sex relationship? Whilst our approach should be one of openness and inclusivity, young people are often exposed to stereotypes in the wider world, and it may be that she is worried that others will look down on her relationship.
- The information suggests that the relationship started well, however there are concerning signs - the developing secrecy and avoiding staff, the increased make-up and long sleeved clothing. It is therefore key to ask whether this is Briony exploring a new identity through the relationship with Jasmine, or are these attempts to hide something else?
- Whilst this scenario is written in the context of domestic abuse, could these be indicators of something else? Could Jasmine be recruiting Briony to be exploited in some way, and the injuries are a means of control?
- Briony clearly has an injury this morning which she does not want to talk



about. Whilst the suspicion is that this was caused by Jasmine, there is no evidence one way or the other at the moment and there is therefore a need to ensure that this is established.

Action

- It is important that someone speaks to Briony about the concerns and whether the injury is linked to the relationship with Jasmine or something else.
- There will need to be consideration of whether the Police should be involved at this stage - as both young people are over the age of 16 if this is something that happened within the relationship then it falls within the definition of domestic abuse.
- Your concerns and a plan of action need to be provided to the social worker and, if necessary a multi-agency plan needs to be considered.
- As both Briony and Jasmine attend the local college, it may be possible to get information about Jasmine from the college, however there will be a need to be mindful of information sharing requirements which may limit what the college can pass on. The college should be able to give more information about how Briony has been in college and who she is with during the day, and this can feed into an ongoing risk assessment.
- Think about how you can work with Briony to give her the skills that she needs to keep herself safe. At Briony's age she is still in need of protection from the adults around her, but she should also be included in the plans that are drawn up. The plans will need to acknowledge the risk but also ensure that they do not restrict Briony's liberty.
- A chronology of events should be maintained.