

## Part One Chronology

Date	Event	Information	Impact on child
15/04/1999	Belle born, 6lbs 10oz.	No known information about family.	
28/04/1999	Health visitor home visit.	Routine post-natal visit to check on child. Mary, mother seen, Belle put on 1lb.	Appears to be thriving at home, routine follow up.
06/07/2002	River born @ 38 weeks 6lbs 5oz.	Referred to health visitor for follow up by midwifery as no ante natal care.	Belle had not been seen for routine (health) screening, no record of immunisations although Mary said she had taken her to the GP, not registered.
16/07/2002	Health visitor home visit.	Both children seen and Mary, their mother. Mother challenged about where Belle had had her immunisations and Mary admitted she hadn't. Mary told health visitor they moved around a lot and were just back from staying with friends in the West Country. Dan, her partner does seasonal work on the farms or the fairs when he can. He was fruit picking.	Belle seen and was chatty and responsive to her mum. Her height and weight were on 9 <sup>th</sup> centile. River had put on a 1lb since birth and was breastfed. Belle was enjoying helping her mother look after River, fetching nappies and singing to him.
05/11/2002	Health visitor home visit as there had been no attendance at clinic for immunisations. No one at the address.	No answer when visited the home on a planned visit. Called round later and still no one there.	

14/05/2003	Health visitor – saw River at Clinic.	Mary reported that Belle had been going to local pre-school since beginning of summer term. River given first immunisation.	River healthy, beginning to move, could sit unsupported. On 9 <sup>th</sup> centile but gaining weight. Responsive to his mother.
21/08/2003	Health visitor home visit.	Saw Mary and Belle and River. Belle chatty about her friends from pre-school and starting school, showed her uniform.  Mary encouraged to get the children immunised.	Toys in the home, neighbours coming around and Mary and the children appeared well. River taking steps unaided, babbling and pointing to Belle.
05/08/2004	Skye born @ 39 weeks 7lbs.		
16/12/2004	Education welfare discusses Belle's attendance.	Belle only managing 46% attendance. Mary says Skye is not sleeping well so she oversleeps in the morning and can't get Belle to school.	Belle missing education but teacher reports she is able when in school.  Not yet statutory school age but of concern.
02/04/2005	Mary seen at home by health visitor.	Health visitor concerned by Mary's presentation, seemed unkempt, tired, and sad.	Children asleep upstairs and not seen.
23/04/2005	Health visitor home visit.	Mary said she was feeling better. Belle back in school routine and River and Skye sleeping better.	Skye was seen walking and babbling. River could concentrate on playing with blocks on the floor and was responded to by his mum as well as tender towards Skye even when she kept knocking over his tower. Skye

			approached her mum for comfort and health visitor felt routine monitoring sufficient.
16/10/2005	School review with Education welfare.	Belle's attendance improved and it was noted that Dan was bringing her and that he had attended the parent's evening.	Belle doing well in school. She has made friends and achieving the targets set for her.
19/11/2005	Police notify children's social care that the family have come to their attention because of a domestic violence referral.	Mary called the police to say Dan had attacked her while she was holding Skye.	Police visited and parents were reconciled. Children seen and appeared fine. No marks and no wish to press charges.
27/11/2005	Police notified by neighbours of fight between Mary and Dan.	Mary and Dan said this is a malicious call.	Children asleep and not seen.
23/12/2005	Anonymous call (believed to be neighbours) re children's social care alleging Mary and Dan are using drugs and not suitable parents.	For initial assessment.	
30/12/2005	Planned visit to follow up the allegation.	Parents deny using drugs. They report that parenting 3 children can be hard work but that they are coping and do not require support. NFA	Children appeared well cared for. Belle said she liked school and loved helping her mum look after Skye. River was seen and heard making words.
13/10/2006	Police notified of a further domestic abuse allegation, again anonymously.	Parents deny anything happening.	Children seen but unwilling to talk to police. No obvious marks or injuries.

18/01/2007	Other parents complain to school about Belle's parents sitting in local park with River and Skye smoking/drinking. School advises referral to social care if they are concerned.	Not followed up.	Not known. Belle's attendance at school is good (80%) and she is achieving targets set. River could be in Reception although not yet statutory school age so school do not refer to education welfare.
15/05/2007	School nurse records Reception check.	River in school and maintaining growth along 9 <sup>th</sup> centile.	River attending school since Easter holidays and both he and Belle doing well in school.
12/12/2007	Education welfare notified that Belle and River attendance below 80%.	Discussion between SENCO and Education welfare whether to pursue non-attendance.	Children learning well when in school and have peer friends.
04/07/2008	Head teacher notes on school reports that there has been no attendance at parents' evenings this school year.		Belle finishing year 4 and preparing for year 5. River entering year 2 in September.
11/11/2008	None of the children seen in school this term. Education welfare asked to visit.	Mum seen at home promised to get children into school.	Polite, quiet children seen by education welfare officer. Mum reporting hard to get children into routines. All 3 now on school roll.
08/12/2008	Lunchtime supervisors tell head teacher concerned by the quality of food provided to the children, suggest free school meals?	Head teacher speaks to mum and encourages her to apply for free school meals.	Concern about whether children needs are being neglected - food and attendance.
03/02/2009	Improved attendance.	Dan bringing children and speaking to their	

		teachers.	
18/03/2009	Skye tells her teacher that Daddy has left.		Observed that Belle is bringing the children to and from school.
20/03/2009	Headteacher asks Mary if she can refer her to children's social care for some support. Mary refuses and says she is managing.		No attendance at any of the parents' evenings for any child.  Children still having minimal food in packed lunches, staff supplementing with breakfast club food.
07/10/2009	Head teacher meeting with Dan and Mary.	Concerns raised about attendance, packed lunches, and attendance at parents' evenings. Also encouraging parents to look at secondary schools for Belle.	Children quiet in class but seem to be keeping up although attendance is around 75%. Dan explained that he often works away and relies on Mary to manage the children.
13/10/2009	Police receive anonymous phone call about neighbour dispute, a fight in the street	By time police arrive, situation has calmed.	No reports of children being involved although one of those fighting is alleged to be Dan. No-one willing to make a statement or alleging injuries.
18/11/2009	Domestic violence incident reported anonymously to police.	Mary tearful and saying she had been hit.	Children spoken to and confirm that Dan hit Mary because there was no food in the house. Refer to children's social care.
26/11/2009	Children's social care complete assessment.	Family refusing support. There are some concerns but not felt to meet child protection threshold.  Encouraged to seek	Children's school attendance noted to be erratic, and parental support with education not always there, some concern about whether there is

		additional support from children's centre.	sufficient food. Good bonding observed between the children and their mother. Dan working away on the fairs for a week, spoken to by phone and feels the family are managing.
08/07/2010	Head teacher rung by secondary head teacher to say Belle has not arrived for the transition day.		Belle expected to manage secondary transfer although school would have liked to offer her additional support, Mary has refused.
15/07/2010	Pastoral team at children's school concerned how well the family are managing as Belle seems to take the parental role with her siblings walking them to and from school. Neither parent has been seen since October. Not felt to meet threshold of referral to children's social care.		Children in school and achieving. Ongoing concern about how well their needs are met at home and no evidence of parental interest in their education. Class teachers feel each child could achieve more with greater support and more consistent attendance. However, they have friends and appear to be able to learn.
07/12/2010	Both schools refer to children's social care to report children missing from education.	Education welfare had discussed with Mary in October and nothing has improved. Discussion between DSLs and EWO decided to try referral to social care rather than prosecution.	River and Skye attendance at 45% and Belle has been much lower 10%.
16/12/2010	Children's social care visited home. (planned visit)	All children at home with Mary. Dan has now left for good. The house was clean and	Children quiet and did not report problems. Belle said none of her

		tidy with well stocked cupboards, appropriate bedding, and toys available for the children.  Encouraged to get children to school. Offers of informal support refused.	friends from primary school came to the secondary school with her and she was finding it hard to make friends.
10/03/2011	Panel meeting to discuss educational needs of children.	Decision made to pursue legal proceedings.	
14/03/2011	Education welfare visits home and explains legal process.	Mary very upset and says children refusing to go to school.  House looked untidy and unclean, there was no evidence of food.  Mary accepts referral to children's social care.	Belle says she still has no friends but also that she tries to get River and Skye to go to school.
17/03/2011	Social care - home visit.	Mary tearful and admitting she can't cope.	Children not getting educational needs met. Unclear whether they are getting sufficient food. Appear cared for in terms of clothing and relationships with each other and to the social worker.
29/03/2011	Child in need meeting.	Plan – Belle offered pastoral support in school. School offering TA to meet River and Skye at school.  Plan to improve how Mary manages the children's care specifically food and school attendance.	

02/06/2011	Home visit by social worker.	<p>Children at home as school holidays. Social worker let into home by River. Belle has gone to visit their father. Mary is asleep upstairs. River and Skye say their mother is often asleep and they cannot remember the last time they had food. Mary is woken and makes the children scrambled eggs.</p> <p>Decision to call an initial child protection case conference.</p>	<p>Children are hungry. Unclear how well their developmental needs are met as they appeared to be at home unsupervised as Mary was asleep.</p>
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## **Part Two**

### **Arriving in placement**

Belle, 13, River, 10, and Skye, 8, were removed into care on an Emergency Protection Order, following their mother, Mary's heroin overdose and hospital admission. The children had been on child protection plans under the category of neglect for the preceding six months.

There were two emergency placements available; one for Belle where she would be the youngest child in placement which was felt to be beneficial for her as she was known to be carrying much of the responsibility for her two younger siblings. The other placement for River and Skye was with Norman and Audrey who were also caring for Chloe, 8 and Jack 6.

Norman and Audrey were new carers but had a large house with lots of space. They had been doing a good job with Chloe and Jack. Norman worked from home so that he could take the children to and from school and was willing to do so to maintain their routines. Audrey had impressed the fostering team with her commitment to supporting children to have contact with birth families. They also have a good relationship with their back up carer, Ann and she would be willing to look after Chloe and Jack while the introductions are done with River and Skye.

The decision was made that River and Skye would be brought to Audrey and Norman's house after Norman had collected Chloe and Jack from school and taken them to Ann's. To make this happen Janine, the social worker, arranged for a taxi to collect River from his school and meet her at the children's home, she went to collect Skye herself.

Janine is on her ASYE and wrote in her reflective journal that night:

"3 months after I started working with River and Skye, I had to take them to meet new carers tonight. My colleague, Andrea, took Belle to a placement with Phil and Sue. Apparently, they are experienced carers, she's a sensible girl I hope she will be ok.

I was very shocked by how taken in I had been by Mary; her neighbour tells me she's been on drugs for years and that it's been getting really bad since Dan left. The neighbour thinks he has another family which is why he was coming and going and she's not sure how interested he is in this one. The house was dirtier than I had ever seen it, there were no clean surfaces, all the plates and cups were soiled although there were no signs of food, the fridge was completely empty. Even the children's bedrooms which have always had clean sheets when I've been in before were bare of any bedding and smelt slightly musty, again something I have not previously noticed. It looks as if Mary has been using the sofa to sleep on and there were filled ashtrays, syringes and foil lying around. How can I have missed this on my previous visits?

There were no bags for the children to put their clothes and toys in. Fortunately, I had brought the team's suitcases with me and we used those. Skye had a toy rabbit, that she had hidden behind her chest of drawers, he looked very well loved. River

insisted he wanted to bring his top trumps about sea animals, I thought he might have grown out of top trumps, most children I know playing with them are younger than River. There were very few clean clothes, but Skye told me Belle always makes sure they have enough school uniform so we found that and their pyjamas which Belle also makes sure are clean for them.

Audrey and Norman were very welcoming. They told the children a bit about themselves and walked them round the house and garden. Norman's quite quiet but Audrey's chatty and warm. She also told them about Chloe and Jack. Chloe and Skye are the same age. River and Skye were quiet, even more than they usually are. Audrey offered them pizza which they both ate.

I left them to have some quiet time together before Chloe and Jack came back. I'm going back in the morning after Norman has taken River and Skye to school. Audrey will take Chloe and Jack in to school in the morning and they have both said they will talk to the teachers about the change in circumstances. I will speak to the schools after having a proper meeting with Audrey and Norman filling in the paperwork. We did what was needed to get everyone through tonight. River and Skye said they liked their rooms and showed me where they had put their clothes. They said goodbye to me holding the toys they had chosen. Audrey was already having ideas about what they could do with her. I hate the paperwork but I have a good feeling about these carers.

Oh no I've just remembered I never said anything to the children about what had happened to Mary ...and they never asked."

### **Task**

Your group task is to write a diary entry imagining you are one of these children as they prepare for bed tonight. (Your trainer will allocate one of the five children in the foster home for your group to think about).

## **Part Three**

### **First placement breakdown**

During the last year the placement had been going well. River and Skye are settling into the routines offered by Audrey and Norman. Chloe and Jack have now been in placement for 18 months and this is the longest placement they have managed, they had two short-term crisis placements and the move to Norman and Audrey had been planned with the hope (on Chloe and Jack's social worker's part) that it could turn into a long-term placement, possibly the permanent one, although Audrey and Norman are only approved as short-term carers.

You are Leslie, the supervising social worker for Norman and Audrey. Whenever you visit the home you are impressed at the calm, loving care on offer from both Norman and Audrey. Your role is to support Audrey and Norman and you have had regular meetings with the children's social workers. Unfortunately, you are now the most consistent social worker as both the previous social workers have been reshuffled and you have heard another reorganisation is imminent.

Audrey is becoming increasingly frustrated that her concerns about Chloe's behaviour are not being taken seriously. Chloe, now 9, targets Jack and as the youngest child in the group he is the most vulnerable by age, he is now 7 and desperate to be included in the activities that the others are doing. Chloe is quick to anger and lashes out at Jack, who tends to be closest as he wants to do what Chloe and the others are doing. Chloe gets angry at school too and is regularly asked to leave the class to see the head teacher which is the school's behavioural strategy. In Audrey's opinion, Chloe sees this as a treat rather than a sanction as the headteacher struggles to be authoritative in her management of her and so Chloe returns to the teacher convinced that it is the teacher's behaviour rather than hers which needs to change. Chloe sorts out her problems by fighting adults and other children. Audrey has found strategies that work, such as getting Chloe to walk the dog with her. She also likes to run around, or have her hair brushed and like many other foster carers, she has discovered the importance of the trampoline as a calming mechanism. Audrey makes sure she or Norman talk to Chloe about her behaviour explaining how her behaviours hurt others and offering other ways of expressing her feelings that are less harmful. Chloe does not like being excluded from the family activities and so this has some impact. She wishes it was possible for a more unified approach between school, and in contact sessions too. Audrey wants to support Chloe and Jack in contact with their father but again is concerned for Jack's safety as their father too cannot manage Chloe consistently and it has not been possible to arrange for the same contact supervisor to assist him in this process.

In Audrey's view Chloe needs additional input to help her settle into the placement, help her and Norman keep Jack safe from Chloe's behaviour and to manage what she anticipates being a challenging transfer to her next school. Audrey's view is that action must be taken now, before Chloe enters puberty.

In the Reviews Audrey's request for help are noted. The social worker before the last one was trying to negotiate getting the contact with Dad improved so that there was the same contact supervisor. Dad is now going to AA and beginning to make

changes in his behaviour, however he has made previous threats to kill foster carers and his last partner left because of violence. The school support the request for therapeutic help for Chloe; Chloe is a capable child easily distracted by others, she is already adept at identifying vulnerable children and bullying them. Chloe is engaging, capable and over the last year has been able to make some friends. She participates well in social groups such as cubs where there is lots of activities in small groups with adult supervision. Chloe likes adult attention and can be responsive to shared interests.

## **Task**

You are meeting in supervision with your supervisor and want to discuss the best way of supporting Audrey at Chloe's next Looked After Child Review scheduled for 2 weeks' time. In preparation, you think about a series of questions:

- what are the issues for Chloe?
- what are the issues for Jack?
- what effect is this having on River?
- what effect is this having on Skye?
- what are the issues for Audrey?
- how do they differ for Norman and how might you find that out?
- what might be the implications for you in your role, or for the local authority?

## **Part Four**

### **Chloe has left placement**

While the foster family were away on holiday together, Chloe held Jack under the water in the swimming pool. Chloe thought this was a joke. Jack, Audrey, and Norman did not. Audrey and Norman asked for Chloe to be removed from placement as they felt unable to keep Jack and, potentially, River and Skye safe.

Leslie, the supervising social worker knows this is exactly the situation Audrey and Norman had been telling her they feared was emerging from Chloe's behaviour and that they had already told her that should they feel unable to keep other children safe from Chloe they would be asking for her to be moved on. As Audrey had kept saying that was what she wanted the help for so this could be avoided. Although Leslie's manager asked her to try to persuade Audrey and Norman to keep Chloe, they refused and she has moved.

#### **Task**

- How do you think each child feels; Jack, Chloe, River, and Skye?
- What will be helpful for them?
- What support do the carers need?
- What else should happen?

## **Part Five**

### **Permanence planning**

Following Chloe's removal from the placement, the placement of Jack now 8, Skye, 10 and River, 13 continues with Audrey and Norman. It's decided in their reviews that Skye and River will move to local schools rather than continue being driven by Norman to and from school.

River begins to tell Norman that he is fed up going to contact with his mum when she never shows up. Skye still wants to see her mum and is disappointed that she rarely comes.

Skye and River have contact as much as they can with Belle and this is arranged between both sets of foster carers.

Jack and his Dad meet regularly at the contact centre. Chloe's placements continue to breakdown. Jack wants to see Chloe but it's not always possible as Chloe is now being sent out of county. Jack's behaviour at school and in placement is always unsettled after he has seen Chloe, this lasts for a week or so.

Jack has lived with Audrey and Norman for 2.5 years, he is on a Care Order. River and Skye have lived there for 2 years and are also on Care Orders. Audrey and Norman are short term foster carers.

The social workers know there should have been a permanence plan but Audrey and Norman have not agreed to make a commitment to the children and because the placement is going well it is not felt to be in the children's interests to disrupt them.

### **Task**

- How are you going to help these children achieve permanence? What developmental issues may be anticipated?
- Which relationships are 'the golden thread' that need to be thought about and sustained as part of the permanence plan?
- What support could you offer Audrey and Norman if they were to take on the children permanently?
- Which legal options would offer greatest security to everyone and why?

## **Part Six**

### **Planning for Chloe**

You have just faced a stream of consciousness from a new social worker, Yasmin, on your team. Following the latest reorganisation, you have had to allocate cases quickly with only a cursory glance at the latest review reports. You have asked the social workers to find time to read the background and get a sense of the children's history but you know realistically that there is not time to do that.

Yasmin is angry that she must manage a change of placement for Chloe. Chloe is 13 and has been placed in a therapeutic placement (her 10<sup>th</sup> placement since coming into care 6 years ago) out of county where her behaviour has begun to improve, her school reports show that she is now learning and she has started playing sport and losing weight after the health professionals had flagged her obesity as increasing her risks of acquiring life limiting conditions. Her relationships with her peers were developing as a by-product from her sport. Last week's directive has insisted that there was no more out of county funding for placement with immediate effect and Chloe will be placed in the local residential provision as fostering have decided Chloe is not suitable for foster care as she becomes violent in family care and has a history of hurting animals.

Yasmin is angry about the decision because she does not think it is in Chloe's best interests. She has been to the residential home in preparation and been told by the staff that they cannot limit food even to a child who is severely overweight and she is concerned how that element of Chloe's care plan will be managed. Yasmin has read reports suggesting that Chloe might be vulnerable to sexual exploitation and felt if the staff could not manage to be assertive about what food they provided, she had questions about their ability to stop Chloe going missing.

Additionally, Yasmin wanted to send Chloe to the local school and discussed it with Chloe's dad, with whom Chloe still has contact. Yasmin then got a phone call from the adoption team manager who used to be the supervising social worker to the carers looking after Chloe's brother, Jack. Leslie had told Yasmin to read the files as it was important to consider Jack in her planning for Chloe. Jack and his foster siblings all attend the school Yasmin was going to recommend for Chloe, in addition Leslie was concerned how contact was managed between Chloe, Jack and their dad.

Yasmin was overwhelmed, angry and anxious about what the best decisions for Chloe were.

### **Task**

You have asked Yasmin to read Chloe's files and summarise the pertinent points for supervision later today. You are responsible for helping Yasmin formulate Chloe's care plan.

- What are the main issues emerging for you to think about?
- How are you going achieve permanence for Chloe?