

Southwark Safeguarding Children Board



Child U

Serious case Review

Key messages and recommendations

Who is Child U?

- 16 year old boy of black African origin
- Both parents from Sierra Leone
- Killed in a knife attack in SE17 on 14/9/15
- Police later arrested a suspect and case was due to go to trial but this was discontinued on the advice of the CPS.
- Decision to hold a SCR on the basis that *'there is cause for concern as to the way in which the authority, their board partners or other persons have worked together to safeguard the child'*

Family background

A childhood in both England and Sierra Leone

- U was born in the UK; sent back at 3 years old and attended private school
- Mother gave birth to daughter whilst he was back home
- U returned to UK aged 10 years

Family Issues

- Mother was concerned about risks from drugs, violence and gang culture in the area
- U's brother as a child had serious behavioural difficulties
- U's brother assessed by Children's Social Care in 2010
- Siblings were not assessed at time
- U's brother was briefly accommodated in 2010.

The review period February 2014 to September 2015

Key factors

- U's brother was serving a 30 month prison sentence for robbery (with a knife)
- U was placed in a nurture group in secondary school Years 7 - 9 owing to low achievement
- U excluded 4 times from secondary school for disruptive behaviour and offered pastoral support and mentoring
- March 2014 U had a 'managed move' between secondary schools (Year 10)
- April 2014, two presentations to St Thomas' hospital for facial injury & knee injury
- From September 2014 U returned to his new school with 'a recognisably changed attitude'

The review period February 2014 to September 2015

Winter of 2014:

- U started going missing C and came to the notice of police
- Educational Psychologist report completed Dec 2014 identified significant needs and he was not able to access the curriculum
- Moved to a work based programme 'Building Lives' that lasted one term until he assaulted another pupil, and threatened another with a knife
- "a tough boy who wouldn't back down"

The review period February 2014 to September 2015

February 2015 onwards

- U's brother released from prison Feb 2015 and stabbed the same day; and a second time in April 2015. Returned to prison due to possession of blade and baseball bat
- U arrested in June 2015 in connection with an armed robbery of a pizza delivery man and fleeing scene was said to discard 'a long bayonet type hunting knife.' He was bailed to appear at court on 23/9/15.
- U went missing for 12 days in July 2015 – on his return home interview stated he had been with friends
- 14 September 2015 U was stabbed and killed
- After his death mother found a letter stating he stayed away from home due to being afraid of another young man.

SCR conclusion

‘Generally, agencies worked in ‘silos’. The cumulative effect was that, as U’s behaviour deteriorated in school and at home, as well as out in the community, there was no single agency or professional who was in a position to assess how this all fitted together and what it meant in terms of his risk of harm. .’

SCR authors

How do we work better with at risk adolescent boys?

- Asking the right questions
- Understanding their communication difficulties
- Targeting resources
- Parenting support
- Knowing about their influences

Normalising the support needs for adolescent boys

- *“I really didn’t know GPs were anything to do with mental health. They need to promote this.”*
- *There’s a lack of relationship – all my doctor says when I get in the room is, ‘What’s the problem?’ in a grumpy voice and then writes a prescription.*
- *“They’re professional”, “They have the knowledge”, “They know the stuff”.*

(Healthwatch 2016)