



The Surrey Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) has published the report of a Case Review undertaken in 2016 and which was agreed by the SSCB in May 2017.

The review concerned a 13-year old child (Child MM) who experienced emotional and physical harm in November 2015 due to escalating emotional and behavioural difficulties which resulted in no community provision or secure care being made available to her. The family have had an extensive history of involvement with Surrey agencies and the child was accommodated since the age of seven.

The main focus of the review was to understand what Child MM's life was like, especially during the year before the critical incident when she was accommodated in numerous placements and received a range of support services.

The review has identified that staff from different agencies demonstrated persistent commitment to her care, often at their own physical and emotional cost.

The review also highlighted the complexity of the work with young people who are acutely vulnerable but either overlap or do not fit neatly within any of the three current pathways for secure accommodation (mental health, criminal justice, welfare). The local authority reported that during September 2015 they had unsuccessfully approached over 150 residential providers (general and secure) across the whole of the UK for a placement for Child MM.

Ultimately, the individuals caring for Child MM had made heroic attempts to promote her safety, however the systems in place failed to adequately account for the needs of such complex and vulnerable children. Such problems can only be addressed through systemic changes, whereby the child's needs are put at the centre of coordinated multi-agency responses, without the need to label the child or require a definitive diagnosis.

I concur with the author's recommendations contained in the report, in particular recommendation 10, that the findings of this review should be shared with NHS England, Department for Education, Department of Health, the Youth Justice Board and Ministry of Justice.

Elaine Coleridge Smith
SSCB Independent Chair