

Assessing risk of further child maltreatment: a research-based approach

Jones D, Hindley N and Ramchandani P (2006)

Case Study

This is an example of a completed risk assessment prepared at the end of protracted care proceedings. The mother, Jane, was seeking further expert assessment and the return of her eight year old daughter Kayla, on the basis that she had attended a parenting group and was now able to meet the needs of one child. Contact remained difficult. Kayla's father had no involvement in her life. Kayla was one of a sibling group of three, the two younger boys having been placed with a maternal aunt. Her older half sister had been removed from the home many years previously.

Use of this model supported a social work recommendation that Kayla needed permanent placement outside of the family because she would be at severe risk of further maltreatment if she returned to her mother's care.

Factors	Future significant harm more likely	Future significant harm less likely
Abuse	Neglect The house was dirty. Kayla missed appointments, her school attendance was 75% and her clothing was often soiled.	
	Severe growth failure Kayla's weight fell to the 0.4th centile in her mother's care. It is now on the 9th centile.	
	Previous maltreatment Jane's older daughter went to live with her father as a result of neglect.	
Child	[Child's] mental health problems Kayla has been referred for therapy as a result of her eating problems.	
Parent: Include mother and father if involved with child AND new partners if resident or having contact with child	Lack of compliance Jane continues to miss appointments and some contact.	

Assessing risk of further child maltreatment: a research-based approach

Jones D, Hindley N and Ramchandani P (2006)

Factors	Future significant harm more likely	Future significant harm less likely
Parent: Include mother and father if involved with child AND new partners if resident or having contact with child cont.	Denial of problem Jane continues to blame social workers and her ex-partner for her difficulties.	
	Abuse in childhood – not recognised as a problem Jane does not accept that her own neglectful childhood caused her harm.	
Parenting and parent/ child interaction	Disordered attachment Psychological assessment concluded that Kayla has a highly avoidant attachment to her mother.	
	Lack of empathy for child Jane asserts that Kayla was ‘fine’ when she lived at home.	
	Poor parenting competency Jane is in debt and facing eviction. The home is still sometimes dirty.	
Family	Power problems: poor negotiation, autonomy and affect expression Jane often shouts at the contact supervisor and has threatened the social worker.	
	Lone parent family	
Professional	Breakdown in partnership working, exclusive focus on parents’ needs, child not seen. Kayla not seen by social worker on majority of visits when she lived at home.	Resources available Family support work would be available
Social setting	Social isolation Jane stays home most days playing on the computer.	
	Lack of social support Jane has few friends and no contact with her family.	