

1

Background

Tristan was 17 years old when the case review consideration referral was received. He lived with his father. Tristan's mother left home when he was 5 years' old and he has not seen her since. In January 2022, Tristan was referred to Education Welfare Service due to poor school attendance and concerns were raised about his weight being low. In December 2022, Tristan had told a member of school staff that he was severely depressed and experiencing physical and emotional abuse at home, so the school referred Tristan to MASH. A CIN assessment was undertaken and a Youth Engagement worker was allocated to work with Tristan. A further MASH referral was made in April 2023 due to ongoing concerns with Tristan's emotional wellbeing and weight. In May 2023, Tristan was admitted to hospital due to concerns about very low BMI and cardiovascular issues.

2

Purpose of a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review.

The purpose of serious child safeguarding case reviews, at local and national level, is to identify improvements that can be made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Learning is relevant locally but has a wider importance for all practitioners working with children and families and for the government and policymakers. Understanding whether there are systemic issues, and whether and how policy and practice need to change, is critical to the system being dynamic and self-improving. (Working Together, 2023)

3

System Findings Levels of Need

1. Early opportunities to identify Tristan's developing health needs were missed. Insufficient consideration was given to whether neglect was a factor in his condition so this did not result in appropriate multi-agency information sharing or child in need support to ensure that his condition was robustly assessed and monitored.
2. Thresholds for the assessment and support for children in need, or at risk of or experiencing harm are not consistently understood across the partnership, in particular in respect of older children. There is a clear need for more tailored assessments and a bespoke child protection approach for cases involving older children where their autonomy and mental capacity must be balanced against their right to be protected from harm.

7

Further information and resources

13 recommendations have been made by the independent reviewer. The full report can be read [here](#)

Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Neglect tool kit – includes guidance on working with adolescent neglect.

https://safeguardingpartnership.swindon.gov.uk/info/15/for_professionals/45/neglect

Early Help Assessment & Plan

https://safeguardingpartnership.swindon.gov.uk/downloads/file/1365/early_help_assessment_final

How to escalate concerns for a child

[Multi-agency process for the resolution of professional disagreements relating to safeguarding protection of children](#)

Mental Capacity Act for 16 to 17 year olds practitioner resource

[Mental capacity act 16 to 17 year olds | learning from reviews](#)



4

System Findings Education Attendance

3. A 'light-touch' approach to addressing attendance for pupils who are at the borderline of the threshold for persistent absence sends a message to children and their parents that this is not a priority and risks entrenching poor attendance. Absenteeism is then likely to escalate significantly during periods of crisis, whether a national issue such as the Covid-19 pandemic, or a crisis in the child's life.

5

System Findings Mental Health & Mental Capacity

4. National challenges in respect of the availability of child and adolescent mental health services have resulted in a local system that is not sufficiently agile in its response to critical moments when a young person is seeking care and open to change, nor to consistently respond in a way that is targeted to individual needs.
5. Significant progress has been made in respect of professional understanding of the general principles of the Mental Capacity Act in Swindon. However, a more nuanced understanding of the impact of trauma and co-occurring needs such as neurodiversity and eating disorders on executive functioning will better support practitioners when assessing a young person's capacity to take decisions in respect of risks and medical treatment.

6

System Finding Professional Resolution

6. Understandable professional anxiety and conflicting views on appropriate interventions meant that communication between agencies became adversarial, entrenching rather than resolving areas of professional disagreement.