Warwickshire Safeguarding

Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review

Emily and Ryan

INDEPENDENT REVIEWER:
Mark Dalton
October 2024

Contents

Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review....1
1. Introduction. 3
2. Terms of reference. 3
3. Methodology....5
4. Engagement with young people and their families....6
5. Events prior to the incident leading to this review. 6
6. Emily – background information. 8
7. Ryan – background information....9
8. Domestic abuse. 10
9. Missing 13
10. Child Criminal Exploitation and National Referral Mechanism (NRM) ...15
11. Assessment. 18
12. Trauma-Recovery Model 21
13. Accommodation 23
14. Impact of Covid 19....24
15. Engaging young people who are hard to reach....24
16. Working with young people where there are Domestic Abuse concerns. 26
17. Multiagency response. 27
18. Early Help and Prevention....28
19. Summary. 28
20. Conclusion....30
21. Recommendations....31

1. Introduction.

1.1 This Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review has been commissioned by Warwickshire Safeguarding Partnership to learn from the circumstances which led to a serious sexual assault by one Looked After Child in supported accommodation on another Looked After Child, also in supported accommodation.

1.2 The young people had been in a relationship for over 12 months and knew each other before being accommodated by the local authority. The existence of the relationship was known to the agencies working with the young people and there were long-standing concerns that the relationship was abusive.

1.3 To protect their identity, the subjects of this review will be known as Ryan and Emily. Ryan was 17 years old and Emily was 16 years old at the time of the incident. Both young people are white British and have spent all their lives in the UK.

1.4 Warwickshire Safeguarding undertook a rapid review of the case in December 2021 in accordance with Working Together 2018. The rapid review panel concluded that the case met the criteria in Working Together to conduct a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR).

1.5 The National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel were informed in January 2022 of this decision and agreed that a LCSPR would be appropriate as there is evidence Emily has suffered significant abuse which is likely to have a serious long-term impairment on her emotional and psychological well-being, and overall mental health because of experiencing domestic abuse and rape.

1.6 A characteristic of this review is that there are a significant number of agencies involved, beyond the expected statutory services. While the majority were unable to engage productively with either Emily or Ryan, it is indicative of the efforts made to find a service which could break the cycle of both Emily and Ryan repeatedly missing from care and help Emily to end her relationship with Ryan.

2. Terms of reference.

2.1 The scope of this review is 12 months from October 2020 until October 2021, the date Emily disclosed the abuse to her mother.

2.2 Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs) were agreed upon as follows:

1. Assessment:

a) What were Emily's and Ryan's identified needs?

b) What models of assessment were used (i.e., trauma-informed practice, attachment theory etc)?

c) Were their families appropriately involved in assessments?

d) To what extent were Emily and Ryan involved in decisions made about them?

2. Professional response:

a) Were current Agency and Safeguarding procedures followed, do they support best practice, and how can they be improved?

b) What was the effect of the National Referral Mechanism on Ryan's behaviour, and how did professionals respond to his behaviour?

c) What resources are available for children at risk of child criminal exploitation, and was Ryan able to access them?

d) Were multidisciplinary meetings/strategy meetings convened to reassess risk?

e) What was the outcome of professional meetings? (i.e., effective sharing of information, reassessment of risk, additional resources, support for workers etc)

f) How were concerns shared with managers within agencies when plans did not work (i.e., Ryan or Emily did not engage with the services offered)? Is there evidence of clear leadership and a willingness to become involved in finding solutions to difficult problems?

g) Is there evidence of shared working and a joint approach?

h) Did the availability/cost of resources affect plans?

3. Domestic abuse:

a) Are adult models of responding to domestic abuse appropriate for abusive adolescent peer-to-peer relationships?

4. Innovative practice:

a) Faced with an unusual combination of challenges how can agencies work together to develop innovative thinking and new approaches?

5. Equality and Diversity

In responding to the key lines of enquiry partner agencies were asked to include consideration of how race, culture, ethnicity, and

other protected characteristics may have impacted on case management.

3. Methodology

3.1 A Lead author was identified in June 2022 and the Terms of Reference for the LCSPR established in August 2022. Agencies produced further information by addressing specific key lines of enquiry before a workshop which took place in November 2022. The decision to work in this way was taken to focus the analysis in the review on areas of practice which were most relevant to the assault on Emily by Ryan.

3.2 Due to the detailed information which had been submitted as part of the Rapid Review, it was agreed that chronologies and/or full Individual Management Reports would not be requested from agencies. In place of the usual documents, a template was produced that included the Key Lines of Enquiry that agencies were asked to complete.

3.3 The Reflective Learning Workshop was a virtual meeting attended by over 30 practitioners and managers from the agencies who had worked with Emily and/or Ryan. The reflections and input from those who attended this meeting are contained throughout this report.

3.4 Two initial findings from the practitioner learning event are that individual agency records do not reflect the amount of interagency working and information sharing that occurred in this case. Secondly, in complex cases like these joint working and case sharing is essential, a single worker could not have covered all the work required to safeguard Emily or Ryan, although it is extremely helpful to identify the central person who can coordinate and analyse the information from different sources.

3.5 The agencies involved were as follows.

Agency	**contact with Ryan**	**contact with Emily**
Compass Connect (Health)	☑	☑
Coventry and Warwickshire ICB	☑	☑
Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust	☑	☑
George Eliot Hospital		☑
South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust	☑	☑
University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire	☑	☑

MARAC	☑	☑
Nicholas Chamberlain school		☑
Refuge		☑
Domestic Abuse Support Team		☑
Safe Haven Supported Accommodation Ltd		☑
Vineyard Homes Ltd	☑	
Moving Up Care Ltd	☑	
Warwickshire Police	☑	☑
WCC Legal Services	☑	☑
WCC Independent Reviewing Service	☑	☑
WCC Youth Justice Team	☑	
WCC Children Services (Inc Children In Care Team, Child Exploitation And Missing Team, Emergency Duty Team)	☑	☑
West Midlands Ambulance Service	☑	☑

4. Engagement with young people and their families.

4.1 Ryan and Emily were informed by their respective workers that a review was taking place and invited to meet the overview author to discuss the care and support they had received.

4.2 There have been difficulties in contacting Emily and Ryan to invite them to participate in this review. Written information has been provided and a face-to-face approach through their current workers has taken place. There will be a further attempt to share the learning with Ryan and Emily at the time of publication.

4.3 Ryan's mother met the Report author and a colleague from the Safeguarding Partnership prior to publication of the Overview Report. This meeting was prompted by concern over repercussions to family members on publication.

5. Events before the incident leading to this review.

5.1 Emily and Ryan are from different towns within Warwickshire and knew each other before they became Looked After Children. Their routes into care were different and will be described below.

5.2 Their relationship started in mid-2019 and it soon became apparent to Emily's allocated social worker that this relationship was violent and abusive. Plans were in place to try and manage the relationship, but these were frequently disrupted by the number of incidents that needed to be responded to. On several occasions, Emily told her social worker that she did not think the relationship with Ryan was a healthy one but was equivocal about breaking free from it. Emily did not want to become directly engaged with Refuge[1].

5.3 The reasons for this are not clear, suffice it to say many people in Emily's position struggle to end an abusive relationship, she had conflicting emotions about Ryan and told workers and carers that she loved him and had become emotionally dependent on him. She also felt that she had nowhere else to go and the indicators are that her self-esteem was very low. It is also highly indicative of a coercive and controlling relationship. Emily has always been reluctant to work with new services and new professionals.

5.4 In September 2021 Emily recorded a video on her phone of Ryan raping her. The recorded incident occurred when Emily was 16 years old and Ryan was 17 years old. Both young people were Looked After Children and lived in supported accommodation, although they were not placed together.

5.5 In October 2021 Emily sent the video to her mother who shared it with Social Care and the Police. The following day Ryan was arrested and admitted the offence, he also stated that there were other offences against Emily and that he had raped her multiple times.

5.6 Emily disclosed to Warwickshire Police that she had been raped multiple times over two months by Ryan, the last time being in September 2021. She provided video footage of two incidents where she can be seen to be upset, whilst being raped by Ryan. She also gave details of being assaulted by Ryan and an occasion where he held a knife to her throat. Ryan had threatened to harm her family. She confirmed that she had always denied the assaults in the past but wished to make a complaint now.

5.7 Ryan pleaded guilty to rape and was subsequently convicted and sentenced to 4 years and nine months in January 2022. He was also required to sign on the Sex Offenders Register for life.

[1] Refuge is a national charity working against domestic violence. It has a local presence in Warwickshire and provides a range of services including specialist outreach workers and independent domestic violence advocates (IDVA's).

5.8 Prior to the disclosure of rape, there had been previous Police involvement for assaults that had been perpetrated, usually by Ryan, although there were also complaints by him that he had been assaulted by Emily.

5.9 Concerning the offence for which Ryan was convicted, it occurred in Ryan's supported accommodation and he was aware that it was being filmed. The video of the assault was shown in court as part of the prosecution, although Ryan did not attempt to deny the offence. Neither did he show any remorse at the point of arrest or subsequently.

6. Emily – background information.

6.1 Emily first became known to Children's Services in 2012 following the breakdown of her parent's relationship and concerns about domestic abuse between Emily's father and his new partner. She has a younger half-sibling who continues to live with her mother. She had spells of living with her mother and father after they separated. In 2018 Emily's mother became seriously ill and was taken into intensive care and it was expected that her recovery would take over a year. Emily went to live with her maternal grandmother for approximately six months while her mother recovered in hospital.

6.2 Emily became a Looked After Child in December 2020 when she was 15 years old. Emily was already in a relationship with Ryan when she became a Looked After Child.

6.3 Emily was initially placed with foster carers and remained with them for approximately six months before they gave notice to end the placement. This placement eventually failed because Emily was going missing regularly and breaking family boundaries. However, it is clear right from the start that Emily did not want to stay there and she would frequently stay either with her father or with Ryan.

6.4 Between January 2021 and June 2021, Emily's school and college struggled to get her to engage in any form of education on a regular basis. The school considered remote learning but Emily would not engage with this either. It is alleged that Emily left college after threats from Ryan because he did not want her to speak to other boys.

6.5 The next move was into a shared semi-independent living placement in May 2021. The placement offered eight hours of direct 1:1 support with staff on site 22 hours a day. Emily was moved to a solo placement within the accommodation provider following a significant amount of damage caused to the original placement that rendered the property uninhabitable.

6.6 The final move in the period under review occurred in October 2021 to a single-person placement with an enhanced level of support and sleeping-in staff. This ratio was further increased after the disclosure of rape to provide additional safeguarding. This placement ended in November 2021 because Emily was unable to comply with the boundaries put in place by the accommodation to safeguard her.

7. Ryan – background information

7.1 Ryan's family have an extensive history of agency involvement due to concerns regarding domestic violence, exclusions from school for the children, parenting capacity, physical and emotional harm, children's behaviours, child exploitation, drug and alcohol misuse by the children, family dysfunction and anti-social behaviour. He has a younger sister and brother and an older brother. Ryan also has a congenital heart condition. He was referred for an assessment for autism in mid-2019.

7.2 Ryan first became known to Children's Services in 2016 when he was 12 years old. This followed an incident of criminal damage which led to a Community Resolution Order imposed by the Police.

7.3 In 2020 Ryan was made the subject of a Child Protection Plan alongside his sister because of emotional abuse within the family. Concerns had been raised that both children were exposed to violence, physical abuse, drug misuse and criminal activity.

7.4 Ryan became a Looked After Child in July 2020 when he was 16 years old and the situation at home had irretrievably broken down. Due to his age when he became a Looked After Child, Ryan was placed in supported accommodation and subsequently moved to semi-independent supported accommodation in February 2021.

7.5 Ryan's behaviour always presented challenges for his placement; he refused to accept boundaries on his behaviour and when confronted he was usually verbally abusive, physically intimidating and would take out his anger through acts of vandalism against the home. Records show a young person who found it difficult to compromise or climb down and instead escalated situations to a point where threats were made which often resulted in the Police being called.

7.6 Frequently these disputes involved Emily, who would be found in Ryan's placement when she had gone missing. The prospect of Police involvement and arrest were not deterrents to Ryan.

8. Domestic abuse.

8.1 The Police have records of three incidents which occurred before Emily's 16th birthday, if she had been over 16 these would have been treated as incidents of domestic abuse and a DASH risk assessment completed[2]. Once she had turned 16, Emily always declined to answer the DASH questions, these assessments were graded as medium risk, which is the agreed response where a person refuses to answer.

8.2 The relationship between Emily and Ryan was abusive and controlling. While there are isolated incidents of Emily retaliating, the overwhelming evidence is of him perpetrating verbal and physical violence towards her resulting in bruising and scratching, attempted strangulation and threats of harm with knives and other objects coupled with coercive control.

8.3 The first referral to the Domestic Abuse Support Team was made in February 2021. Emily's social worker noticed bruising to her eye in April 2021 and Ryan had also held a pair of scissors to her throat. This incident was assessed as high risk and the Police consulted with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for advice about charging, although there was insufficient evidence to proceed. Also, during April, a referral was made to the Independent Domestic Violence Advocate service (IDVA) but Emily declined any support.

8.4 The failure to prosecute Ryan at this time may also have unintentionally reinforced his power and control over Emily as the failure to prosecute could also be interpreted (albeit wrongly) as professionals being unable to protect her.

8.5 In May 2021 the North Warwickshire MARAC[3] discussed Emily as a victim/survivor of domestic abuse and recorded Ryan as the perpetrator. Later in the month Emily and Ryan were in Police custody due to mutual allegations of domestic abuse between them, Ryan had also made threats to kill Emily. Further incidents followed a similar pattern throughout July and August.

8.6 In September 2021 Emily and Ryan were discussed at South Warwickshire MARAC which essentially shared the information that had been discussed

[2] The DASH tool (Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour Based Violence Assessment). The DASH tool (Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour Based Violence Assessment) is part of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Co-ordinator (MARAC) referral. This is a risk assessment form to help assess the risk level for the victim. The DASH risk assessment has now been replaced by Domestic Abuse Risk Assessments – DARA

[3] The Multi Agency Risk Assessment Co-ordination (MARAC). The Multi Agency Risk Assessment Co-ordination (MARAC) is the forum where local agencies share information about high-risk domestic abuse victims.

previously[4]. They were discussed again at the MARAC in October, 5 days before Emily shared the video of the rape with her mother.

8.7 In October 2021 an agreement was reached for Emily to be moved out of Warwickshire. She declined offers of support around domestic abuse from the Domestic Abuse Support Team or Youth Justice Team.

8.8 Ryan attempted to control who Emily saw and what she told her social worker and family. He also threatened her about talking to the Police when they sought to remove her from his accommodation.

8.9 Emily had complained about Ryan's violence and had shown a social worker and a Police officer her injuries on occasion. However, she refused to make a formal complaint, which may itself have been evidence of further intimidation. Because of this, the Police had considered a victimless prosecution, but the CPS's advice was that the evidence threshold had not been met. Also, Ryan's status as a Looked After Child, created the scenario of the local authority supporting the prosecution of a child in its care, and criminalising a person who was already significantly disadvantaged.

8.10 The level of abuse was clear to all the professionals who tried to work with Emily and Ryan. From an early stage, there had been concerns that the relationship could be violent. Unfortunately, Emily was not able to use any of the support services that offered help. On one occasion Emily told a worker from the Missing and Child Exploitation Team that she believed Ryan acted like this because he really loved her.

8.11 It may be the case that Emily did not feel sufficiently safe to instigate action which could potentially leave her open to threats or actual violence from Ryan or his wider family or associates. A move away from the area had been offered, but Emily did not want to accept this.

8.12 Emily also clearly felt very strongly about Ryan; school staff had described this as Emily being "obsessed" with Ryan even though they thought she was constantly manipulated by him which often resulted in her being placed in dangerous situations.

8.13 Even after bail conditions were imposed on Ryan not to have contact with Emily (in April 2021), she continued to make and receive calls from him and colluded with the breach of bail conditions by agreeing to meet and stay with him.

[4] whether a case is discussed at the North Warwickshire or South Warwickshire MARAC is determined by the address of the victim/survivor.

8.14 There was some confusion within the professional network about how bail conditions were interpreted. At times, this led to some frustration from partner agencies that Ryan was not arrested for breach of bail conditions.

8.15 The Police guidance on this matter is clear. The decision whether to arrest a suspect is at the Police officer's discretion based on whether there are reasonable grounds to suspect involvement in a criminal offence for which an arrest is necessary for the prompt and effective investigation of that matter[5]. It is not dependent on a victim deciding whether they require an arrest to be made. It is also the case that if an individual is released with Police bail conditions and goes on to breach those conditions, if there is still insufficient evidence to proceed on the original offence, or further enquiries still need to be made, then there are no sanctions available to the Police. In addition, the time a person spends in custody for the breach also limits the time available to conduct a further interview.

8.16 Emily was identified as the victim in ten domestic abuse-related incidents, where Ryan was identified as the perpetrator. Some of these were recorded by Warwickshire Police but had occurred in the West Midlands force area, so were transferred to them for investigation. Often the reports were made by a third party and rarely came from Emily herself. However, of the 20 occasions Ryan was arrested and detained in custody, seven of those occasions were for assaults on Emily (not including the rape). These were referred to CPS where it was felt there was sufficient evidence for them to make a charging decision, however, CPS did not charge.

8.17 Learning point - the CPS decisions regarding the evidential threshold not being reached could have been appealed. The level of violence and threats clearly indicated a further serious assault was likely. All opportunities, including legal proceedings, should have been further explored.

8.18 Several agencies make reference to SafeLives Young Person's Risk Indicator Checklist (YP DASH)[6]. It is similar in format to the adult DASH assessment tool but there is a greater emphasis on dynamic risk factors. Although there is evidence that most agencies are aware of it, there was no attempt to use it to assess the risk to Emily. In future cases practitioners should consider using the more age-appropriate assessment tool.

Safeguarding concerns

[5].https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pace-code-g-2012
[6] Young people's Dash risk checklist with guidance

9. Missing

9.1 Episodes of Emily going missing were a common occurrence before she became a Looked After Child. It is clear from agency records that Emily's workers understood that she was at a higher risk of sexual abuse and criminal exploitation when she was missing.

9.2 Following the commencement of her relationship with Ryan, Emily had a pattern of behaviour of seeking out Ryan and choosing to be with him which predated her becoming a Looked After Child.

9.3 Her home situation was not stable, at a Missing Intervention Meeting (MIM) in November 2020 concerns were raised that there had been several occasions when Emily had been located by the Police late at night and had not been reported missing by her parents.

9.4 Emily was reported missing 13 times in the first month after she was placed in a foster home. During the period under review, she had 118 missing episodes and 43 Return Home Interviews (RHI's). Return home interviews are important, not only as a statutory requirement but also as a safeguarding check and an opportunity to build a relationship when a young person may be at their most vulnerable. In Emily's case, she benefited from a consistency of worker, in that most of the interviews were undertaken by a person that she grew to know and trust.

9.5 This relationship proved to be important in understanding the level of abuse in Emily's relationship with Ryan and the Child Exploitation and Missing Team worker was able to pass on information to her allocated social worker and the Police.

9.6 Ryan was reported missing on 40 occasions between February 2021 and August 2021. At the time Ryan was living in supported accommodation where he had a curfew of 23:00 hours and so, whenever Ryan was late, he was reported missing even if it was by as little as 30 minutes. As time wore on, when Police officers spoke to Ryan, he was more aware of his rights; that he was accommodated under Section 20 and that the Police had no power to return him to his placement. When officers spoke to EDT, they confirmed this to be the case and Ryan was left where he was, which raises the question as to why he was reported missing in the first place. Ryan made it clear that he had no intention of adhering to a curfew and that he would stay out, doing as he pleased, until he was either located or returned of his own volition.

9.7 The relationship with the worker from the Child Exploitation and Missing Team was one of the few consistent relationships that Emily developed with professionals. Her worker had been assigned to Emily from January 2021, and the worker remained allocated throughout the period under review. This worker conducted the majority of Return Home Interviews

(RHI's although it is noted some of these were declined by Emily. Within the structure of the RHI's the worker had attempted to build a relationship and weave in direct work, around exploitation awareness, healthy relationships, and what a baby needs (due to concern Emily may be trying to conceive). The worker also encouraged Emily to seek additional support from relevant agencies concerning her mental health, sexual health, and domestic abuse, and took Emily to several different appointments, with CAMHS and Sexual Health appointments. Emily's engagement was sporadic, and this was thought likely to be connected to the abuse she was receiving. However, records show that Emily had reached out to the worker in times of crisis and this was probably the most significant and productive relationship that any professional had with her.

9.8 The overarching concern was domestic abuse between Ryan and Emily with both at times being identified as perpetrators and victims. Emily had made disclosures of domestic abuse to this worker who had also witnessed multiple injuries to Emily. A referral was made to the Domestic Abuse Support Team (DAST) by the allocated Social Worker in February 2021 and a worker was assigned from the Domestic Abuse Service Team in March 2021. Unfortunately, because Emily did not engage with this service the case was closed to DAST in August 2021.

9.9 The relationship with the worker from the Child Exploitation and Missing Team was key in trying to introduce Emily to other services. Not only did the worker try to act as a bridge between Emily and the Domestic Abuse Support Team she also sought consultation from the child exploitation nurse, because of the concerns about Emily's health and the risk of her becoming pregnant.

9.10 Learning point - it was good practice to use the relationship Emily had developed with the practitioner from the Child Exploitation and Missing Team to attempt to introduce her to other resources and undertake work by proxy. This strategy should be reflected in procedures and considered when attempting to work with hard-to-reach young people.

10. Child criminal exploitation and National Referral Mechanism (NRM)[7]

10.1 In 2020 the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel published a National Review aimed at identifying improvements in practice to protect children who were threatened by criminal exploitation.[8]

10.2 Compared with the sample in the national study, Ryan was not typical of a young person subject to criminal exploitation; the majority in the study lived at home with family and their involvement with criminal exploitation was the first time they had become known to local services. In contrast, Ryan had been a Looked After Child for several years and already had an extensive criminal record.

10.3 Although the National Review noted that common indicators of vulnerability did not always act as predictors of criminal exploitation, the constellation of vulnerabilities exhibited by Ryan namely, the number of times he was missing, involvement in criminality including knives and suspected involvement in local drug distribution networks, placed him firmly in a cohort of children at risk of criminal exploitation.

10.4 The National Review goes on to identify 11 key findings where practice could be improved to safeguard children. Not all these findings are relevant to Ryan, but a number highlight areas where services could be improved for the future and potential opportunities were missed to intervene more effectively with Ryan. (See Appendix 1 for the key findings and their relevance to Ryan).

10.5 An NRM referral was made by Ryan's social worker in May 2019. At the time, Ryan had been on a Child In Need (CIN) plan since 2017. The grounds for the referral were due to concerns that Ryan was a victim of Modern Slavery – Criminal Exploitation.

10.6 The Child Exploitation Assessment tool was completed in January 2021 and a decision was confirmed in early February that there were reasonable grounds for Emily also to be included in the National Referral Mechanism.

10.7 Emily was discussed in a Child Exploitation Team allocations meeting. There were concerns that Emily was vulnerable to exploitation. Emily frequently went missing. These episodes were usually overnight,

[7] The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the framework through which potential victims of trafficking in the UK are identified, so that they can be supported and protected. It is a particular process to be followed when it is suspected that an adult or a child might be a victim of trafficking. In the case of a child, the child's best interests will be considered but are not the primary consideration in making a referral into the NRM. The Modern Slavery Act 2005 states that First Responders should refer all child victims to the NRM.

[8] It was hard to escape: Safeguarding children at risk from criminal exploitation

sometimes involving travel to other counties and were often with other young people at risk of exploitation.

10.8 Additional vulnerability factors included her recent placement in foster care and the breakdown in family relationships. It was recognised that Emily would benefit from some direct work around exploitation, and interventions to try to reduce push and pull factors for her missing episodes.

10.9 There were legitimate concerns based on Ryan's behaviour and his known associates to suspect that he was involved in drug distribution and the recruitment of other vulnerable young people. There were parallel concerns that Emily may be sexually exploited through these networks.

10.10 This decision was regularly reviewed in accordance with the procedures. The level of risk remained constant because neither Emily nor Ryan was able to engage with the services offered to them.

10.11 The NRM referral was recorded by Warwickshire Police in September 2019 but was then overlooked due to the volume of other investigations involving Ryan. No warning markers were added to Police systems to indicate that he had had a conclusive grounds decision by the NRM[9]. It is doubtful that any Police officer was aware that Ryan had had a Positive or Conclusive Grounds decision. As a result, this NRM decision was not reflected in any of the forms used by the Police to seek advice from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

10.12 It is important to note however, that the matters referred to CPS for charging advice were not relevant offences to the NRM decision for Ryan. The NRM can be used as a defence for an individual engaging in criminal activity associated with exploitation such as the supply of drugs. So, although the NRM decision was not highlighted to CPS, it did not affect their advice on the offences Ryan was referred for.

10.13 It is possible, that Ryan may have thought that his status of being an exploited child gave him immunity from prosecution, or at the very least a degree of mitigation for his own criminal behaviour. However, it is far more likely that the NRM status was irrelevant to Ryan and had no impact on his behaviour.

10.14 This view is supported by the Police analysis of Ryan's behaviour; by September 2019 (when the NRM referral was recorded on Warwickshire

[9] At the time Ryan was referred to the NRM there were two levels of decision-making; initially there is a reasonable grounds decision, which was a low threshold test: from the information available it is suspected the not proven that the individual is a victim of trafficking. Within 45 days this was followed by a conclusive grounds decision where, on the balance of probabilities "there is sufficient information to conclude the individual is, more likely than not a victim of trafficking".

Police systems) Ryan was named as a suspect in 32 separate incidents (not investigations, that number is much higher). By comparison, after the Conclusive Grounds Decision (which was made in August 2020), until his arrest for rape, a further 32 separate incidents occurred where Ryan was recorded as a suspect. In simple numeric terms, the NRM had no effect on Ryan's behaviour at all.

10.15 The history of Police involvement for Ryan in the 12 months under review is extensive but also goes way beyond that time frame. There are a total of 177 investigations recorded against Ryan's name on Police records between 1st August 2017 to 25th October 2021 with him being named as either a victim, suspect or an involved party. These include offences of violence, anti-social behaviour and criminal damage, child protection incidents (these would include his numerous missing episodes) and domestic abuse investigations. It also includes incidents where Emily or other young people have been reported missing and Ryan has been linked in some way (usually they have been found together). Of those 177 investigations, there are 80 investigations that fall within the scoping period of this review.

10.16 There have been significant changes since this case; firstly, the introduction of a pilot project[10] in Warwickshire to hold a monthly local NRM Panel to discuss all NRM referrals on young people who are at least 100 days away from their 18th birthday (older children will continue to have decisions made by the Home Office). The aim is to speed up decision-making; the current target is to make decisions within 60 days, although in practice they are usually made before this. A local coordinator will offer advice about the referral process and whether a subsequent referral needs to be made to the independent child trafficking guardianship service. Secondly, the statutory guidance on the NRM has been updated and the time limit between the reasonable grounds decision and the conclusive decision is now 30 days rather than 45 days. Also, the guidance to the CPS regarding the weight they give NRM decisions changes in accordance with case law and would be different if a similar case were referred today.

10.17 Learning point - the NRM is not a status, but a mechanism for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and exploitation, ensuring they receive the appropriate support. While in this case, it may not have influenced decision-making regarding the prosecution of Ryan, it should be properly noted and recorded. The introduction of the Warwickshire-based NRM Panel should assist this in the future.

[10] Devolving child decision-making pilot programme: general guidance

Practice issues

11. Assessment.

11.1 Working with Emily and Ryan posed several dilemmas for the practitioners and agencies assigned to work with them. Firstly, the volume of incidents kept workers busy dealing with – at times almost daily – incidents of missing, interpersonal violence, criminal damage, accommodation problems and other issues which militated against the opportunity to pause and take stock and question whether doing more of the same would ever be enough.

11.2 Neither Emily nor Ryan had a clinical diagnosis of any psychological condition. Ryan had a medical diagnosis of a heart condition, but apart from that, their failure to engage with mental health services meant that no diagnosis was made for either of them.

11.3 Some of Ryan's behavioural traits and mannerisms were suggestive of autistic spectrum disorder. The diagnosis was not pursued until September 2018; this was prompted by his failure to engage with CAMHS. There was a significant delay in progressing this; a referral was made to the Neurodevelopment Team for an Autistic Spectrum Disorder assessment in July 2019 but the necessary correspondence was not sent to his mother until October 2020 – some 3 months after he became a Looked-After child. The completion of this paperwork by the parents and school is seen as a prerequisite before an appointment for an assessment is arranged. As there was no further contact from either parent the referral was closed.

11.4 to make the assessment of Ryan conditional on his parent's engagement, particularly as he was Looked After Child at this time may be something of a missed opportunity. The significant delay from the referral to the letter being sent to parents coupled with the possibility that it may have gone to the wrong address may explain why his parents did not respond. Agencies were also dealing with the challenges of working during the Covid-19 long-term at that time which may also have affected the response. In any event, Ryan's suspected Autistic Spectrum Disorder remained undiagnosed, although reference continued to be made to it in various agency records.

11.5 At Ryan's initial Health Assessment (IHA) in September 2020 an SDQ[11] was completed. The results suggested that he should have been referred for a diagnostic assessment. Ryan had previously refused to work with Child

[11] Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire is a short Behavioural Screening Questionnaire for children aged 4 - 16 years to assess emotional wellbeing. There are versions for the parent/carer to complete, one for the child to complete and the school if relevant. It gives a score which indicates when difficulties may be present. Research has shown this is a reliable assessment tool.

and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), which may be the reason this referral was not pursued.

11.6 In January 2021 Emily was detained under section 136 of the Mental Health Act[12] after becoming agitated and angry following an argument with Ryan. At the time it was thought that she was displaying traits of a personality disorder, although this diagnosis was never formalised because Emily refused to attend further mental health appointments.

11.7 The records provided to this review show that Ryan had been assessed on several occasions by different agencies. He came to the attention of statutory agencies at the age of 12 and there are no early years or parenting assessments which would have been helpful in obtaining a full picture of his early life experiences.

11.8 During the scoping period Ryan was the subject of 80 investigations by the Police and because of these 26 child risk assessments were completed, 24 were graded as medium, one as high and only one as standard. Following these assessments referrals were made to Children's Services and other agencies although, as previously noted, they did not have any impact on the number of times Ryan came to Police attention.

11.9 In Ryan's case, his inability to empathise and see things from another's point of view, and his inability to control his temper (often expressed in punching walls or doors etc) are indicative of early exposure to aggressive behaviour, poor attachments, possible Autistic Spectrum Disorder and inconsistent parenting. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are relatively common and can lead to harmful outcomes in adolescence and adulthood.

11.10 The assessments that were undertaken with Ryan were in the context of his offending behaviour. Therefore, Ryan was assessed using AssetPlus and AIM3 by the Youth Justice Service (YJS), these assessments are used following a referral to the YJS to aid decision-making for interventions and sentencing.

11.11 The YJS also used a trauma-informed approach[13] which recognised that early adverse childhood experiences negatively affect neurological development. One consequence of this is that these young people feel threatened by new experiences and new relationships. Unfortunately for Ryan, the frequency of staffing changes was an additional barrier to him forming productive relationships and he was reluctant to work with anyone but the allocated case manager. His mistrust of statutory

[12] Section 136 provides the Police with a power to remove a person from a public place, when they appear to be suffering from a mental disorder to a place of safety. The person will be deemed by the Police to be in immediate need of care and control as their behaviour is of concern.

[13] Working definition of trauma-informed practice

agencies was further exacerbated by breakdowns and changes in his accommodation.

11.12 It is often easier for young people like Ryan to engage with statutory agencies like the YJS because this is mandated and in effect, they have no choice. Where they are offered alternatives or the option of becoming involved with something new, they invariably reject this.[14]

11.13 Emily had been referred to mental health services in September 2019 (before she became a Looked After Child) because of concerns about self-harm, poor relationship with and attempts to harm her mother, labile mood swings and heightened anxiety. Emily and her mother were offered appointments at CAMHS but did not attend consistently and were discharged in July 2020.

11.14 Emily was recognised as a young person who was struggling to manage her emotions and behaviours. At times she has exhibited similar agitated and angry behaviour as Ryan; punching walls to the point where she injured herself. She had not wanted to accept the offers of referral to clinical services. In the past, she has denied thoughts of self-harm or suicidal behaviour, although these concerns had been raised as a result of her actions and statements.

11.15 With regard to Emily, the workers who knew her best were from the Missing and Child Exploitation Team – a consequence of the number of times Emily went missing. These workers believed that Emily had the potential to change her attitude towards engaging with services and would eventually reach a point where she would accept support to end the relationship with Ryan.

11.16 Learning point - Trauma-informed practice locates adolescent behavioural and mental health problems in early life experiences. All assessments need to include this crucial history.

11.17 Learning Point - where there is significant delay between referral for a service and attempts at initial contact, services should ensure that they have up-to-date information about the current circumstances of the young person and the family involved. In these cases, they should explore the options for obtaining the information through different means.

11.18 Learning Point - it is the responsibility of all professionals, not only those with health remit, to ensure that health assessments are followed up and are

[14] this situation appears to have been true for Ryan – at the practitioners event it was noted that his most positive relationship was with his original social worker, but once this person moved on subsequent workers struggled to build a constructive relationship.

not neglected due to more pressing concerns. Concerns that are not addressed should be followed up in subsequent LAC Reviews.[15]

12. Trauma-Recovery Model

12.1 As stated above it seems quite probable that the volume of presenting problems displayed by Ryan and Emily meant that practitioners were so busy dealing with day-to-day crises and other issues the opportunity to reflect on the root of this behaviour and consider a different strategy was all but lost.

12.2 The IMR submitted by the Youth Justice Service makes several references to the impact of early life trauma particularly for Ryan. While the relevance of this is clearly understood, the implications of this are not reflected in the practice of other agencies.

12.3 There are various theoretical models that use an understanding of early life trauma these explain why the interventions with Ryan were unlikely to succeed. The Trauma Recovery Model (TRM) is one attempt to apply knowledge of the significance of early life trauma on the development of cognitive functioning and to sequence the types of intervention which are only likely to be effective when more basic needs are met.

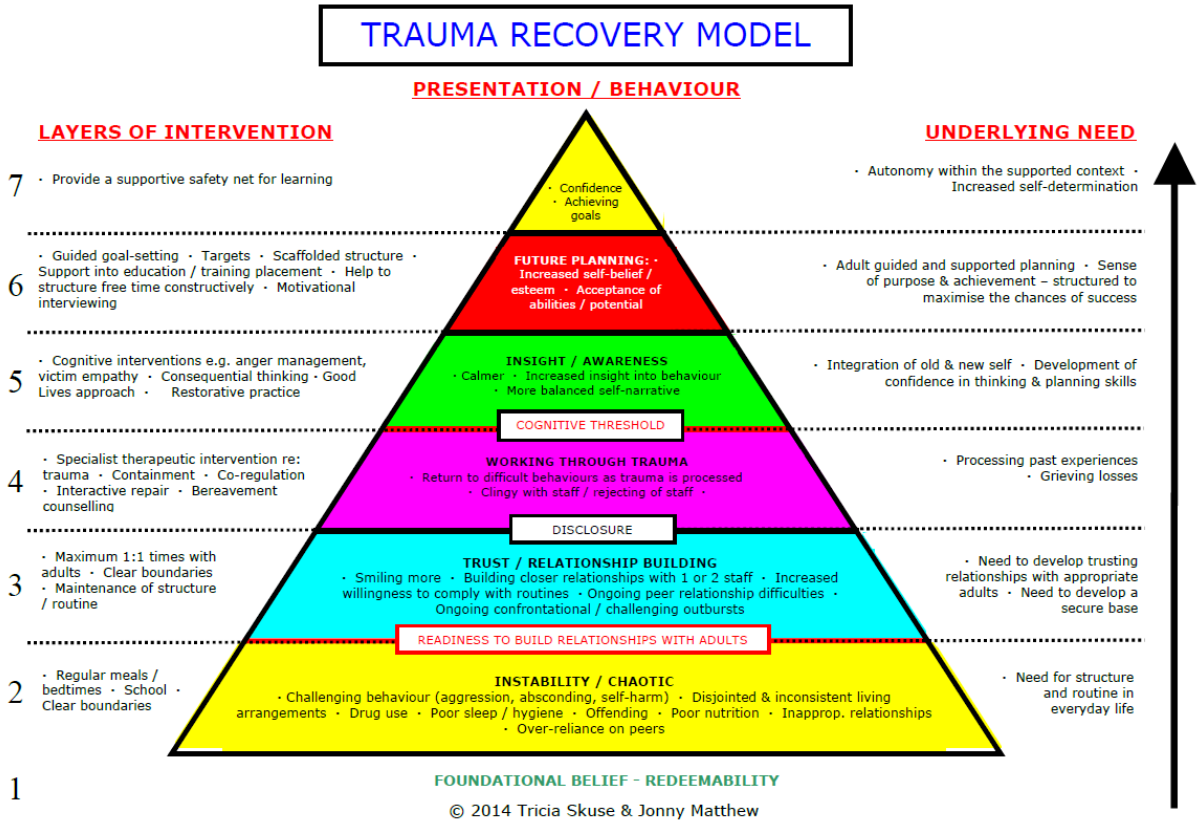
12.4 The TRM model comprises layers of intervention that are the hierarchy according to developmental and mental health needs. The "foundational belief" is that things can change for the better. This was manifestly not Ryan's worldview and his fatalism and inability to believe in a better future for himself would affect any emotional investment or belief in his capacity to change.

12.5 Not surprisingly, Ryan's world was chaotic and moved from crisis to crisis, usually without any attempt at resolution, reparation or acceptance of responsibility. His life lacked structure and routine and he resisted those who attempted to impose these.

12.6 This model would also argue that unless these basic levels of need are met a young person is unlikely to engage in any therapeutic interventions aimed at working through their own trauma and controlling their behaviour.

12.7 The model is described in the diagram below:[16]

[15] IRO Handbook p20 Statutory Requirements.
[16] The Trauma Recovery Model Prison Service Journal July 2015 No 220. While the context of this article is a secure children's home, the methodology and implications for young people like Ryan are clear.



what this model suggests is that the therapeutic interventions offered to Ryan (levels four and five in this model) were unlikely to be successful until his basic needs were addressed.

12.8 Therefore, if trauma-based practice is to be incorporated into the toolkit of social workers and other staff working with vulnerable young people, a useful starting point would be a shared understanding of the implications of early life trauma.

12.9 It should also be noted that several of the key points in the TRM model are also highlighted in the findings of the national review into children at risk of criminal exploitation. Which would support the adoption of this approach to working with young people such as Ryan.

12.10 The TRM is one model of trauma-informed practice and seems to offer a common framework for analysis which may usefully be applied to young people such as Ryan and Emily. There are clear difficulties in introducing this model to older adolescents who have developed a negative and oppositional stance toward those trying to work with them.

12.11 Since the events leading to this CSPR, Warwickshire in collaboration with Coventry has invested significantly in developing trauma-informed practice. The initial needs analysis which led to the commissioning of this

service[17] supports the view that knowledge and experience of trauma-informed practice is variable and uncoordinated. The project aims to embed a shared understanding and definition of trauma-informed practice across the constituent agencies of the safeguarding partnership, to provide specialist supervision, consultation and training in this area of practice.

12.12 Learning point. The insights and analysis provided by trauma-informed practice would help develop a shared understanding across agencies where a succession of referrals are made but declined. It may also help to unstick systems and reframe a young person's behaviour so their rejection of help is seen as a symptom of their mental state rather than an outright rejection of help.

13. Accommodation

13.1 Emily and Ryan became Looked After Children at a relatively late age, and patterns of behaviour and personal freedom have become established to the extent that they would struggle to accept the norms and boundaries of a typical foster home. They were used to coming and going as they pleased and not being accountable to anyone else. Attempts to impose boundaries were not successful and it is inevitable that foster care placements quickly broke down.

13.2 The usual alternative for teenagers who are unable to adapt to a new family life is to offer a mixture of independence and support to enable young people to eventually become tenants of their own property.

13.3 The organisation that offered supported accommodation to Emily believed that this was not the most appropriate placement type for her. In their view, a regulated setting such as a children's home would have been better placed to provide a more robust safety plan for Emily because this type of setting would have more structure than in supported accommodation.

13.4 Many professionals would concur with this view; however, it was clear, based on previous experience, that Emily would not stay anywhere which attempted to impose boundaries on her freedom.

[17] Safer Together - Coventry and Warwickshire trauma needs analysis December 2022.

Coventry and Warwickshire Needs

14. Impact of Covid 19.

14.1 This review was asked to consider whether the restrictions on working practices during the pandemic had any effect on services to Ryan or Emily.

14.2 As a vulnerable student, Emily was offered a place where she could physically attend throughout lockdown, but she did not attend. Arrangements were in place for the Looked After Child worker from the school to check on Emily two or three times a week by liaising with her social worker as well as attempting face-to-face contact but this was unsuccessful. School had struggled to keep Emily engaged before lockdown, and her behaviour suggests that she became less engaged in services as face-to-face contact became more limited and there was more reliance on online communication.

14.3 The restrictions on working practices for professionals made it easier for Ryan and Emily to avoid contact and increased their sense that they could behave as they liked.

14.4 The impact of COVID-19 on adolescents is still being actively researched, restrictions on socialisation and changes in expected patterns of behaviour for an extended period are very likely to have had an impact. Offers of online or telephone appointments are easier to avoid.

14.5 While it is difficult to quantify and assess what difference these changes made to young people who were difficult to engage at the best of times, at the very least the social restrictions during Covid-19 inevitably weakened any sense of accountability that Ryan or Emily may have felt regarding their behaviour.

15. Engaging young people who are hard to reach.

15.1 The key issue and major challenge for services attempting to work with Emily and Ryan either separately or together was their implacable resistance to working with any service voluntarily.

15.2 Working with Emily and Ryan was time and resource-intensive, efforts included:

- 13 Strategy Meetings have been held by the Child In Care Team.
- 9 Missing Intervention Meetings (MIM) have been held by the Child In Care Team.
- 2 Complex Abuse Meetings have been held for Emily, Ryan, and other young people. One by the Children In Care Team and one by the CE and Missing Team.

- All About Me Reviews have been held by the Children In Care Team.
- CE Review Plans have been completed by the allocated worker from the Child Exploitation CE and Missing Team, on a 6-weekly basis.
- In February 2021, Ryan was offered support from the Child Exploitation and Missing team but declined this. It was agreed the YJS would weave in domestic abuse and exploitation work as part of Ryan's order.
- In April 2021, Emily was assigned to a Targeted Support Youth Worker, Targeted Youth Support.
- Ryan and Emily were discussed in the child exploitation and Missing Operations meeting in March 2021
- Emily was offered Domestic Abuse support from DAST but declined this.
- Philomena Protocol[18] is in place for Emily and Ryan.
- The Children in Care team offered out of local authority placement moves to Emily, but these were rejected by Emily and her family. (Who believed that Ryan, as the perpetrator of the abuse, should be the person who moved)
- The Children In Care team offered out of local authority placement moves to Ryan, but these were rejected by Ryan and his family.
- Legal Advice was sought regarding a Civil Injunction against Ryan in June 2021. (A decision was taken not to pursue this as it was against a Looked After Child.)

15.3 The workers involved were committed to supporting Ryan and Emily both professionally and personally. Inevitably, at times workers felt exhausted and frustrated by the lack of progress. The frequency of incidents risked professionals becoming desensitised and questioning their own abilities. In situations like this, the availability of supervision and peer support is crucial, and the quality of supervision and availability of supervisors was noted in the reflective practice event.

15.4 As far as possible, services were flexible in their approach and attempts were made to build on the few positive relationships they had with the

[18] The Philomena protocol was introduced in Warwickshire in May 2021. The aim of the scheme is to identify children and young people who are at risk of going missing, and compile and share useful information that could be used to find them quickly.

professional network either to introduce specialist workers or for work to be carried out by proxy.

15.5 With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to see that without a degree of structure and authority offers of help would be rejected. Neither Ryan nor Emily thought they needed the help that was offered. Paradoxically, when they were offered "support," they expressed the belief that they needed more independence and for people to "get off their case."

15.6 Several agencies that attempted to have a therapeutic relationship with Emily or Ryan have cited the principles of trauma-informed practice as influencing their assessments and attempts at intervention. There are six principles of trauma-informed practice: safety, trust, choice, collaboration, empowerment and cultural consideration. It can be seen that on every count Ryan and Emily's behaviour undermined these principles and made interventions more difficult.

15.7 The professional view was that Emily was more likely to accept help, specifically to break away from the relationship with Ryan. Research into abusive relationships shows that victims invariably struggle to end abusive relationships and will need to feel safe before they are able to do so. Emily had begun to recognise that the relationship with Ryan was unhealthy by April 2021 and had started to think about ending it, even though she was unable to do so at that time and continued to seek him out.

15.8 Since Ryan's arrest for the alleged rapes and domestic abuse, the worker from the Child Exploitation and Missing Team had continued to offer support to Emily, and it was hoped that this will lead to engagement with domestic abuse services. Emily had been referred to a specialist sexual abuse service for further support. The Child Exploitation Team also offered support around further education, training, or employment.

16. Working with young people where there are Domestic Abuse concerns.

16.1 This review raises the question of whether the current models of responding to domestic abuse are appropriate for adolescent relationships. There was a reluctance to recognise that this was an abusive relationship; the proposed intervention for Emily and Ryan was referred to as an intervention around "healthy relationships" which suggests a serious minimisation of the reality of the abuse and the potential for harm.

16.2 There are no easy answers to this question, Emily and Ryan had both witnessed domestic violence as young children and they lacked positive role models for healthy relationships. The strategy of keeping the door open to referral to relevant services in the hope that Emily will reach a point where she can accept help, or circumstances will allow her to

engage was a conscious decision. Workers felt she was moving towards this point, and it may be that her eventual sharing of the video of her sexual assault was her way of taking control of the situation and ending the abuse and she was aware of the consequences of disclosure.

16.3 Domestic abuse was rarely reported by Emily contemporaneously, although she did usually confirm it had taken place after the event. DASH assessments were completed and the risk discussed at MARAC in accordance with domestic abuse protocols. Different strategies were offered both to work with them as a couple to improve their relationship and also to support Emily in ending it.

16.4 Based on the reported comments it would seem the relationship meant more to Emily than it did to Ryan, although he exhibited a level of jealousy and possessiveness. Ryan wanted to keep Emily under his control even though he professed not to care about her very much.

16.5 It is recognised by services that work with victims of domestic abuse that most victims make several attempts to leave an abusive relationship before they are able to do it successfully. There are well-documented reasons for this[19] and while this research is predominantly based on adult victims many of the reasons would apply to Emily.

17. Multiagency response.

17.1 Emily and Ryan had long-standing and complex problems and were referred to a wide range of support from different agencies. At times this made it difficult to have an overall picture of their situation and develop an overarching plan about how to support them.

17.2 Remaining up to date with the latest developments in their lives and sharing information between agencies was difficult because of the volume of incidents and the number of agencies. Procedures were diligently followed, a consequence of this was that there were often parallel meetings held close together with slightly different remits. When considering the list of meetings listed above it may be that time could have been saved by combining some of these meetings together.

17.3 There is a risk in situations like this that key information (such as the NRM) can be lost and fatigue set in at the number of meetings. Changes of workers and difficulty in implementing plans lead to information being lost. However, it should be noted at this point that at the reflective learning event, workers noted that the informal co-working and sharing of information was a positive aspect of this case.

[19] See: SafeLives

17.4 It is clear from the agency records that there were long-standing concerns about Emily and Ryan's behaviour and vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. There is a risk in situations such as these to view their behaviour as a problem in itself rather than symptomatic of their vulnerabilities.

18. Early Help and Prevention

18.1 The information available to this review, awareness of child development and the impact of adverse childhood experiences strongly suggest that the greatest window of opportunity to intervene in Ryan and Emily's lives to safeguard them from exploitation and further harm would have been in their early and primary years.[20]

18.2 It is relevant that they were both in their adolescence when they entered the Looked After system and had developed patterns of behaviour and entrenched attitudes towards agencies and professionals – supported by family and cultural attitudes.

18.3 When Ryan and Emily were of an age when Early Help may have had an impact – 2010 – 2015, services were configured differently. It must also be noted that however the Early Help services were arranged at the time, they offer support for an immediate problem, not as a preventative service for abusive and antisocial behaviour that may (or may not) occur in the future. Early help services are also offered on a non-statutory basis in partnership with parents, so even if appropriate therapeutic services have been available, it would always be dependent on a parent's willingness to accept help.

18.3 Unfortunately, the effect of their early life experiences created instability in their teenage years which made traditional treatment routes difficult to access. Despite the number of referrals that were made to specialist services and the willingness to work flexibly and creatively, all these offers were declined by Emily and Ryan.

19. Summary.

19.1 It seems likely that Ryan avoided prosecution and possible custody following his becoming a Looked After Child for longer than he would have if he had remained at home. This is not to say that as a Looked After Child, he was above the law, but his circumstances and antecedents were known to a wide group of professionals who could intervene in the decision-making process. Workers, particularly in the Youth Justice Service attempted to manage Ryan's behaviour and reduce the number of times he came to the attention of the Police. One of their aims was to avoid prosecution for behaviour which arose as a result of him being in care –

[20] Annual Review of LCSPRs and rapid reviews p21

this included harbouring Emily when she went missing and the damage to his accommodation.

19.2 it is possible that Ryan suffered from an undiagnosed Autistic Spectrum Disorder. His behavioural traits and ability to problem solve and empathise with others were strongly suggestive that this may be the case. This possibility was considered sufficiently seriously for a referral for a formal assessment to be undertaken, but for the reasons discussed in section 11, these were not progressed.

19.3 Some workers in the Local Authority felt in an invidious position due to a perceived "conflict of interest"; the Local Authority was responsible and had care of both children which made advocating and decision-making at times a challenge and a conflict. The Local Authority advocated for orders to be sought to protect Emily and for the Police to act in respect of incidents involving Ryan and this was at times a conflict as the Local Authority was also trying to safeguard and advocate for Ryan and avoid him being criminalised.

19.4 An unintended consequence of this approach was that Ryan may have believed that he had immunity from prosecution; seemingly there were no consequences to his breaching bail conditions and the damage to property in his accommodation only had minor sanctions which did not impact on his behaviour. There is no easy answer to this dilemma; ultimately the primary aim of avoiding criminalising Ryan meant that the cost of dealing with his behaviour was borne by the Local Authority and accommodation provider.

19.5 Working with young people who do not want to engage can lead to a range of services being offered in the hope that if one positive relationship can be developed then this can be the vehicle for feeding in other work vicariously. This was a conscious tactic in this case, in the face of extreme reluctance to engage it was certainly worthwhile to explore this approach.

19.6 Regarding domestic abuse, it would seem that Emily was working through a pattern of displaying behaviour which is often found in survivors of domestic abuse. Violence and aggression are redefined as passion and jealousy – an expression of loving possessiveness – rather than a manifestation of control. Emily had developed behaviour patterns where she went wherever and whenever she liked and found it difficult to keep to boundaries and rules. The relationship with Ryan clearly represented something positive for her; possibly feelings of security and being wanted. Emily reported that she liked winding Ryan up – although this would frequently result in fights between them and violence towards her, it seems that at times she also felt this was a sign of how much he loved her.

19.7 Ryan's behaviour towards Emily was physically and emotionally abusive. There is no evidence that Ryan showed any remorse for raping Emily. This fits into Ryan's attitude towards all of his offending behaviour. There are no records of him showing any remorse and very little responsibility for any of his actions. Regarding the violence towards Emily, his rationale was usually that it was her fault for winding him up.

19.8 If this information had been analysed at MARAC the conclusion would have been reached that violence between Emily and Ryan was escalating and would not respond to offers of counselling.

19.9 Ryan had family and social connections with various criminals in the area and it is believed he was involved in drug distribution and recruiting other young people to become involved with these networks.

19.10 Emily's problems did not begin when she began her relationship with Ryan; agency records show long-standing concerns about Emily going missing, offences of antisocial behaviour, and criminal damage besides the child protection incidents and domestic abuse investigations.

20. Conclusion

20.1 The key issue here is that there are two young people who display similar patterns of behaviour and struggle with the issues of being anti-authority and regulating their own behaviour.

20.2 Individually keeping them safe and avoiding the consequences of their criminal behaviour has been a huge challenge. Individually they were difficult to work with, jointly the difficulties were multiplied.

20.3 Emily and Ryan both had insecure attachments and elements of psychological damage that have shaped the young people they have grown up to be. It is axiomatic that any therapeutic change could only be attempted when and if they felt safe and secure and had confidence in the relationship with the professionals offering help and support. Ultimately this would have meant an enforced separation between Emily and Ryan, this of course has now taken place as Ryan is in custody. Earlier attempts to offer this solution through Emily moving to an out-of-county placement had been rejected by her, and they would likely have sought each other out before long.

20.4 While there is evidence of the knowledge of trauma-informed practice, there are few examples of where this insight has influenced the delivery of services to Ryan or Emily.

21. Recommendations

1. To develop a system and protocol for lead workers in complex cases. (The issue is time allocation and professional support for anyone given the role of managing information and sharing intelligence in complex cases such as this).

2. The existing services for young people who have suffered Domestic Abuse should ensure that risk assessments completed by other agencies are included in risk assessments to fully understand the level of risk.

3. Consideration of the appropriateness of the DASH assessment tool (or any that replace it – see footnote p9) where the victim and perpetrator are both legally children.

4. To ensure that awareness and knowledge of Warwickshire's trauma-informed practice model (the Vanguard Project) are embedded in all assessment tools and that there is a shared understanding of the relevance of this model and the resources available.

5. Where there are domestic abuse concerns between children and young adults who are subject to the National Referral Mechanism these issues should be considered as part of an ongoing assessment of risk.

6. Where there is a concern that a young person may have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), it is the responsibility of all professionals to ensure that these assessments are proactively progressed and completed.

7. Further national research is undertaken to explore the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people subject to the National Referral Mechanism.

Appendix 1

Key findings from the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel – It Was Hard To Escape Report

	Key Findings	Relevance to Ryan
1	**Ethnicity and gender appear to be factors.** The review found that boys from black and minority ethnic backgrounds appear to be more vulnerable to harm from criminal exploitation. In the cohort of 21 children, 15 were from a black or minority ethnic background and all of them were male. This is a serious concern.	As a male Ryan was typical of young people in the survey. Warwickshire is a predominantly white (89.1%) county; therefore, it is less significant that Ryan identifies as white British.
2	**Known risk factors around vulnerability don't always act as predictors.** The common indicators of vulnerability were not present in the lives of many of the children who were the subject of these criminal exploitation cases (the major exception is exclusion from school). For example, only two of the 21 children were looked after by the local authority and the remainder all lived at home with their parents or extended family. Most of the children (and their families) were not known to children's social care before the problems associated with their potential exploitation surfaced.	Ryan was not typical of the sample as he was a looked-after child. He also had an extensive history of criminal and antisocial behaviour.
3.	**Exclusion from mainstream school is seen as a trigger point for risk of serious harm** Seventeen of the children who died or experienced serious harm had been permanently excluded from mainstream education. Permanent exclusion was identified by practitioners and family members as a trigger for a significant escalation of risk. Exclusion has a major impact on children's lives and if it is unavoidable then there needs to be immediate wrap-around support to compensate	Ryan was subject to exclusions from school following episodes of violence towards peers and teachers, broken education (lack of sex education is relevant) SEN statement aged 9 states there were signs of Ryan struggling to manage emotions at a young age – at primary school he would often lash out, kicking chairs, punching walls and be verbally aggressive to teachers – regularly shouting and swearing to express his feelings.

	for the lack of structure, sense of belonging and rejection that exclusion from mainstream school can cause.	
4.	**Effective practice is not widely known about or used** Even when local areas and practitioners know the children at risk of being drawn into criminal exploitation, many are not confident about what they can do to help them. There are a number of different approaches being taken across the country but little reliable evidence of what works, and no central point where effective evidence is evaluated and disseminated.	The NRM referral was recorded by Warwickshire Police in September 2019 but was then overlooked due to the volume of other investigations involving Ryan. No warning markers were added to Police systems to indicate that he had had a conclusive grounds decision by the NRM. It is doubtful that any Police officer was aware that Ryan had had a Positive or Conclusive Grounds decision. As a result, this NRM decision was not reflected in any of the forms used by the Police to seek advice from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).
5.	**Trusted relationships with children are important** We believe that building a trusted relationship between children and practitioners is essential to effective communication and risk management. Establishing such relationships takes time and skill. Above all, persistence, tenacity, creativity and the ability to respond quickly are key qualities required of practitioners.	Ryan was referred to a succession of services which inevitably involved meeting a series of new professionals. For the most part, he declined these offers of help. With the insights of this research and an understanding of TRM, it can be seen that the process of referring to different services possibly militated against any effective engagement with Ryan.
6.	**Responding to the 'critical moment'** There are critical moments in children's lives when a decisive response is necessary to make a difference to their long-term outcomes. Professionals told us that this is likely to include: • the point at which they are excluded from school, • when they are physically injured • when they are arrested More evidence is needed about those key moments so that service design and individual practitioners can	This is an interesting observation based on albeit limited research. There is a challenge for children's services to consider whether they can respond to "critical moments" in the context that current procedures usually require a formal meeting to agree and coordinate a response.

	anticipate them and be ready to capitalise on the receptiveness of children at such times. We can then test what interventions can really make a difference.	
7.	**Parental engagement is nearly always a protective factor** Parents and extended family members need effective support in helping them manage risk from outside the home. This is skilled work and requires building good relationships with parents. A number of parents we spoke to felt blamed and therefore alienated from attempts by services to help.	There is no evidence that Ryan's parents engaged with services. Similarly, there has been no contact in the course of this review to explore how things could have been different and encourage their involvement.
8.	**Moving children and families works for a short period but is not effective as a long-term strategy** Moving children or whole families out of the area provides a breathing space and immediate safety but was not effective as a medium or longer-term strategy. There must be a clear and consistent plan for supporting the child and managing risk in the new location.	This point is well made, but not directly relevant to Ryan's experience; he moved placement usually as a result of breaching rules or causing damage to the extent that the continuation of the placement became untenable.
9.	**More priority should be given to disrupting perpetrator activity** At the local level, there was little information or working knowledge among safeguarding partnerships of what intervention strategies were being taken against the perpetrators of criminal exploitation. This is a marked contrast with the dual approach taken to children who are sexually exploited (i.e., to both help the victims and disrupt the activity of the perpetrators).	N/A
10.	**The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is not well understood and is inconsistently used** Young people who are being criminally exploited are often referred to the NRM in the hope that it will give them protection. The review found that the NRM's original purpose	See 4. above.

	does not always fit well with the circumstances of this group of children and that understanding and use of the NRM was patchy.	
11.	**Comprehensive risk management arrangements can make a difference** Evidence from the cases reviewed suggested that an intensive risk management plan which includes control measures such as electronic tags, within the context of a good relationship with the child and with parental support, can be effective in reducing risk.	While there were comprehensive risk assessments completed with Ryan, plans to manage his behaviour in the community were not successful. Ryan's behaviour and relationship with agencies had moved beyond the point where he would comply with any plans to contain his behaviour.