

Scenario – Social Worker

Theo is 8 years old and Jae is 4 months old. They live alone with their mum, Sonia. The health advisor noticed that Jae had not been putting on weight. After trying to support Sonia, he advised her that he would need to make a referral to Children's Social Care. As a result, I undertook an initial assessment and found out that Sonia had not been coping since her partner left, just before Jae was born. Sonia had felt depressed for a few months, but hadn't told anyone.

I spoke with my manager and we decided that because Jae was so young and vulnerable, we needed to hold a strategy meeting and call a child protection case conference. At the strategy meeting we agreed that Sonia's mum could come to stay to help with the children for a while and that Sonia should be assessed at the psychiatric unit of the local hospital.

The case conference was held with Sonia and her mum, Theo's teacher, the health visitor, the community psychiatric nurse and me, along with the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). Theo's teacher reported that she had been a little worried because Theo's appearance and concentration in class had deteriorated and Sonia would not come into school to discuss it. The health visitor said that Jae was beginning to pick up a little, but still needed monitoring. The community psychiatric nurse said that Sonia had been assessed and was suffering from depression and needed a lot of support. Sonia's mum had no idea how bad things were with Sonia and the children, but really wanted to help. Sonia was beginning to accept that she needed help. We agreed to have a child protection plan for both children. They would be allocated a social worker, Sonia would agree to continue to receive treatment, the health visitor and teacher would monitor Jae and Theo closely and we would hold a review meeting in three months.

At the review meeting it was clear that Sonia had come a long way. She is continuing to have psychiatric support, but is now managing well. Her mum isn't staying all the time, but comes regularly to provide support with the children. As a result, the children are now thriving and Jae is meeting her developmental milestones. We agreed that there was no longer a need for a child protection plan, but that we should refer the family to the Integrated Children's Centre for continuing support.