

ID

1. **Title:** Charlene, Drugs
2. **Author(s):** Bridget Rothwell, Barnardos
3. **Keywords:** Drug misuse, partnership working, roles and responsibilities, pregnancy
4. **Summary of story:** Charlene is the young child of Jane who has a history of inappropriate (sometimes violent) relationships and drug misuse. There are a number of concerns about Charlene who is eventually removed from Jane's care. Jane falls pregnant.
5. **Main Characters:**
  - Charlene 0 - 8months
  - Her mum, Jane
  - Brian, her mum's first partner
  - Sean, her mum's second partner
  - Various public authority and voluntary sector agencies and personnel
6. **The story itself/case narrative:**

See Annex 1

7. **Paragraph by paragraph Commentary on the case narrative (CF CARA) (produced side by side with the case narrative perhaps)**

None necessary - this scenario can be used to illustrate a number of issues, including drug misuse, partnership work, good practice in investigation, assessment.

8. **Supporting materials (video/audio/casenotes/reports/assessments etc) with Case document index of:**
  - None
9. **Learning activities which this case study might support/link to/be used in**

This scenario has been used in a number of settings and particularly with those staff whose main client is an adult who may be a parent, to illustrate the need to keep their 'eyes on the child' and understand their role and the limits of it. It is useful as a tool for basic engagement with issues of recognition and response, but also could be used to address issues of poor practice in investigation.

10. **Links to learning framework case examples -**

Case 2 Drugs  
Case 8 Neglect  
Case 14 Poor Parenting

**11. Links to specific topics in the learning framework, i.e. topics from the training framework which this story might be used to 'illustrate'.**

All of Level 1 from S1-1 to S1-12

With appropriate questions posed at the end of sections can also be used to address S2-1, S2-3, S2 -8; S2 -11

**12. Tutor's notes:**

The scenario can be subdivided into parts in a number of places, depending on your particular focus in the training. As it stands it is an accurate -but selective -summary of real events, but it can be added to as needed if particular points need to be illustrated.

**13. Author's notes:**

**14. Case duration:** 1 year

**15. Date:** 30.01.07

Annex A

Jane gave birth to Charlene at the age of 18. She and Charlene's father, Brian (22), had been together since Jane was 15 years of age. Jane had been looked after and accommodated intermittently since the age of five.

Prior to Charlene's birth, Jane and Brian had been accommodated in a hostel for single homeless people and had just been allocated a tenancy in a one bedroom Local Authority furnished flat.

Jane and Brian were both regular Heroin users. During her pregnancy, Jane was on a methadone programme, her pregnancy monitored by Special Needs in Pregnancy midwives. Charlene spent some time in hospital following her birth on a baby drug withdrawal programme; Jane was discharged but spent considerable time visiting Charlene and appeared to bond with her very well. Jane also breastfed baby Charlene. There was no statutory Social Work involvement with the family in relation to Charlene. Jane was supported by Social Work Throughcare Services and subsequently a voluntary agency

service for tenancy support. The staff quickly became fond of Jane, who was co-operative and grateful, with clear insights into the causes and consequences of her problems and a wish to be a good parent.

For the first five months, Charlene always presented as a content and well cared for baby and the home environment clean, safe and secure. There was considerable input around parenting skills from the voluntary agency staff in terms of basic care and routine.

When Charlene was five months old, Jane split with Brian and immediately moved her new partner, Sean, into her flat. Sean was a known within the local and the professional community as a persistent and long term drug user and had just been released from serving a custodial sentence for offences including violence against other people. Jane had met him through an "aunt" who was known to be a drug dealer. He did however appear to be very supportive and very quickly formed a close bond with baby Charlene, as did his immediate family.

Within a few weeks workers noted deterioration in the standards within the home. There was a marked decrease in Jane's contact with project workers.

At one point during this time, Jane appeared at the project saying that Charlene was crying for no reason all the time and that she didn't feel able to cope any more. Project workers contacted the Local Authority Child Protection Team who met with Jane alone - outcome, Child Protection Social Workers left saying Jane had changed her mind. Voluntary agency staff were not consulted. There was no further action. The voluntary agency staff were unhappy with this decision but were told that there were no grounds to remove the child without Jane's consent. No further services were offered to Jane or Charlene.

Several weeks later Jane again visited the project in a distressed state saying she had noticed a small burn mark on Charlene's leg. She informed workers that she had left Charlene with Sean to go to the shop and had noticed a mark on her leg on her return. The Child Protection Senior Social Worker was contacted who advised that the Police would be contacted to investigate. Police telephoned to say that no-one was available to investigate immediately and as it was Friday they could only send someone to interview Jane over the weekend. Social Work were informed and requested Charlene be taken to her own GP by the voluntary agency's project worker as no-one was available

in the Social Work Department. As no-one was available to support Jane over the weekend the interview with the Police did not take place until the Monday, when both Jane and Sean were able to give a reasonable explanation for the burn - Outcome - No further action.

Several weeks later Charlene had a burn on her hand caused by hot tea being left on the floor which she knocked over herself. Medical attention had been sought but follow up appointments not kept. The Social Work Child Protection team were informed. Support was offered in terms of a nursery placement for Charlene. The Voluntary Agency Project Worker wrote to Social Work Service Manager about her concerns and a Case Discussion was arranged.

Charlene's first day at Nursery coincided with the case discussion. Jane did not attend Nursery to collect Charlene at the end of her session. Project Workers went looking for Jane and eventually made contact with her several hours later. She was heavily under the influence of drugs and unable to care for Charlene. The Child Protection Team were contacted and Charlene taken to a foster placement on a voluntary basis.

Over the following six months a rehabilitation plan for Charlene was implemented but was judged unsuccessful due to Jane's continual substance misuse and difficulties within the community i.e. drug users coming to Jane's door on a regular basis.

When Charlene was 15 months old Social Work Department began to formulate permanency plans, but continued to encourage Jane to remain in contact with Charlene.

Jane now has a new partner and has recently disclosed that she is pregnant.