

Asset Training - Case Study

You work in a Scottish local authority Youth Justice Team with a remit to work with young people between the ages of 8 – 18 years old who are involved in offending behaviour. This work entails provision of reports for both Children’s Hearings and for the Court.

Family Dynamics

Key family members (and relationship to Conor)

Father – Graham Feanie

Mother – Senga Wilkie

Maternal Grandfather – Bob Wilkie

Mat Grandmother – Agnes Wilkie

Mat Uncle – Thomas Wilkie

Cousin – Shannon Wilkie

Offence

You have been allocated a new case. Conor Feanie is a 16 year old male who has just been found guilty in the High Court of a serious violent offence – *assault to severe injury, permanent disfigurement and danger of life*. Ten months earlier, heavily under the influence of valium and alcohol, Conor was involved in an altercation outside a local 24-hr garage. Having accosted an adult male who was in the process of putting fuel in his car, a witness who was present in the forecourt at the time confirmed that Conor proceeded to berate the individual labelling him a “*paedophile*” and yelling, “*I’ll batter you, you f**kin’ beast!*” A scuffle ensued during which Conor was observed (via CCTV footage) to use as a weapon the bottle of vodka which he was holding, striking the victim repeatedly to the head and body. At this point, onlookers pleaded with Conor to stop and informed him that that the Police had been called. Subsequently he threw the remnants of the bottle to the ground, shouted “*He deserved it*” and ran off. Conor was arrested at his home in the early hours of the following morning still wearing the clothes he had on during the assault which were marked with blood stains from the incident.

Current situation

Initially Conor was charged with attempted murder. Following strong representations from his solicitor on the grounds of Conor’s age and vulnerability, the Court agreed to the imposition of supervised bail conditions as opposed to Conor being remanded in custody. Over the following months, negotiations between the Crown and his defence solicitor led to the seriousness of the charge being reduced. Conor pled guilty to the revised charge at the earliest opportunity. He presents in your office as instructed three days after his Court appearance, having received a letter indicating that he must meet with you as soon as possible in order that the process of preparing his Criminal Justice Social Work Report (CJSWR) can begin.

In advance of your first interview with Conor, you undertake a thorough review of the computer-based Social Work Information Systems in addition to requesting old departmental files containing information about his and his family’s historical contact with the Social Work Department. Subsequently you have three appointments with Conor in advance of his return to Court for sentencing, two of which are office-based and one of which takes place at his home address in the company of his mother Senga Wilkie. You also make contact with a wide variety of other professionals from education, social work, health and the police. This enables you to produce a chronology (see additional resource).

While co-operative throughout the interview process, Conor presents as a young man with relatively limited cognitive and interpersonal skills. He struggles to remain focussed during the hour you meet with him in the office. Moreover you find it difficult to gauge his level of understanding about his situation and the possible consequences of his actions. In particular, in seeking to discuss with Conor the detail of the index offence he provides limited additional information from that available in the indictment and the narrative of the facts. He states that he cannot remember much about the incident but does accept that he *“lost it”*.

Visit to the Family Home

During the visit to the family home you establish that the area Conor lives in experiences high levels of poverty and deprivation. There is some evidence of drug use in the stair well of the block of flats where Conor lives and evidence of alcohol use with several empty plastic bottles of low cost cider lying on a box next to Conor’s front door. During your visit, you observe the family home to be cluttered and disorganised with no real space to sit down. Conor’s mother answers the door telling you that she hadn’t been feeling well and had gone for a lie down, it is obvious that she has been drinking due to the smell of alcohol emanating from her bedroom as you enter the house.

At the home visit you discuss Conor’s view of his current situation and family supports. Conor talks protectively of his mother, referring to her as *“all I’ve got left”* and is very clear that he will not speak about his father other than saying *“we lost him eh”*.

You attempt to have some discussion with Conor about his wider family, friends/girlfriends and who are supports for him at present. Conor tells you that this is none of your business, although said *“you probably already know about Tommy and my Papa being dirty b*stards, he should be six feet under no ma da!”*

Task

Your task is to complete an Asset assessment in relation to Conor’s case based on the information provided in this document and the accompanying chronology.