

Case study: Joseph

Joseph is 11 years old. He lives with his mother who is estranged from his father. He has an older brother of 13 years and a younger sister of 9 years. He has a severe learning disability and limited verbal communication.

Joseph is a regular attendee at a short break service – which his mother describes as a “life-saver” as she has quite a lot of stress looking after Joseph and the other children and working part-time.

When Joseph went for his most recent break, staff at the service noticed he had a number of bruises – something they had not observed on previous stays. These were recorded on a body map and social work were informed.

The social worker interviewed mother who she described as caring but anxious and struggling to cope. His mother said that Joseph seemed to be going through a bad patch and had recently started to “nip” or pinch himself which caused

the bruising. His mother welcomed the offer an assessment from the disability team to see if more could be done to support her and agreed she would share information about her concerns about Joseph and any further bruising with the school and short break staff.

The school and short break unit were informed of the outcome of the social worker’s visit and agreed to monitor the situation closely and link with social work again if further concerns arose.

What are the strengths in the way this situation was handled?

What are the shortfalls?

How might this have been handled differently?
