**Integrated Assessment Report**

**For**

**Liam Bruce**

**(6th November – age 11)**

Assessment completed by Tony Downie, social worker

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**Family Background**

Liam Bruce lives with his mother, Mrs Lindy Bruce aged 35 years at 20 Hope Street, Anytown. Liam’s father is deceased. He was tragically killed in a road accident 5 years ago.

Miss Bruce is known to Mental Health and Substance Misuse Services - she has a history of self-harming and of using alcohol as a means of coping with stresses and problems. During her late teenage years, there were a number of incidents of self-harming behaviour and again 2 years ago. On the last mentioned occasion, she overdosed on a combination of alcohol and prescribed diazepam resulting in her admission to Hospital.

The family is known to Social Work. When Liam was a baby grounds for referral in terms of section 52(2)(c) of the Children (Scotland) Act – relating to a lack of parental care - were established at Anytown Sheriff Court in respect Liam, after a Hearing of evidence before Sheriff Henderson.

These narrated concern for Liam’s welfare because of mother’s misuse of alcohol – she had been drunk in charge of Liam on occasions since his birth - and because of Liam’s exposure to domestic violence in his mother’s relationship with a George Wilson.

At the Children’s Hearing as a result of those grounds, Liam was made subject to a supervision requirement requiring residence with his Aunt Phyllis Smith.

At a review Children’s Hearing on six months later, the supervision requirement was continued but varied to allow Liam to return to his mother’s care. At the annual review Children’s Hearing shortly before Liam turned 2, the supervision requirement was terminated. During the period Liam was subject to supervision, Mrs Bruce ended her relationship with Mr Wilson and took steps to address her alcohol problem. This included attending Alcoholics Anonymous.

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**Current Situation**

Liam (now aged 11) has now been referred to the Reporter by Mrs Collins, Head teacher at Anytown Primary School. Her letter of referral raises concerns about Liam’s attendance levels.

School have advised that since the October break, Liam has been absent from School without explanation. Indeed, he has not had a full week of attendance. When he does attend, he is often late, sometimes as late as 10:00 am.

Liam requires learning support and has not been in School at times when this support is provided. His class teacher reports that his homework is seldom being done.

School have concerns that Liam is getting himself organised for school in the morning - Liam comes to School without socks on and appearing unkempt. School are concerned also that Liam is not getting breakfast in the morning or that there are inadequate food provisions in the family home as Liam has said on occasion that he is hungry. In addition school has had to provide break-time snacks.

The home school liaison officer, Mrs Welsh, has been to the home but has been unable to make contact with Mrs Bruce. When Mrs Welsh has attempted to visit it is frequently the case that the curtains are drawn and there is no response.

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**Views of Other Agencies**

There has been recent Police involvement with the family because of antisocial behaviour. Police Officers attended at the family home in the early hours of 19/11/20\*\*, 07/12/20\*\*, and 17/12/20\*\* in response to complaints from neighbours about loud music playing and people at the address shouting, swearing and singing. Police reports indicate Officers attending have found evidence of parties taking place there being a number of persons within drinking, including mother. However, she is not unfit to care for Liam on these occasions, who is in bed.

One of the persons present on all 3 occasions is a Mr Gavin Dickson. He is known to Police to be an alcoholic. Mrs Bruce is always cooperative and apologises for the noise. She has been warned regarding the situation and a referral is now being made to the anti-social behaviour unit of Anytown Police.

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**Other Information Relevant to Assessment**

The Social Work Department were contacted recently by a neighbour who wishes to remain anonymous – she expressed concern for Liam’s welfare stating there are frequent late night parties at the family home

On 14th January 20\*\* Miss Bruce turned up at school to collect Liam. She was slightly unsteady on her feet, and her speech was slurred. There was a smell of alcohol on her breath. The School contacted Social Work. While waiting for Social Work to arrive, Liam burst into tears. He told his teacher that in recent weeks, his mother has been drinking nearly every day and that when she is drinking, his mother can fall asleep and Liam takes care of himself. Liam said that there are often people in the house drinking with his mother until a late hour - sometimes Liam cannot get to sleep because of the noise, and he is unable to work in school because he is tired. Some of these people can get angry and he worries about what they might do.

Liam gets himself dressed and out for school, as his mother is still in bed. He has missed school because his mother was sleeping. Sometimes there is nothing to eat for breakfast. He doesn’t like it when his mother is drinking because his mother often shouts at him, and sometimes calls him names. Liam usually spends time with Aunt Phyllis Smith at the weekend to avoid being at home. He does not feel safe in his mother’s care on a Friday night, which is usually the worst night of the week.

Miss Bruce confirms Liam’s account and explains that she has struggled to cope with the sudden recent death of her mother who lived in England. She agrees to a re-referral to Substance Misuse Service. However she fails to take up appointments offered and continues to drink. School reports continuing concerns about the Liam’s attendance and their presentation.

Aunt Phyllis Smith confirms that Liam usually comes to her home at the weekends, but since social work involvement recently Miss Bruce has refused to let Liam leave, apparently worried that social work will seek to move Liam to Aunt Phyllis’ care full time.

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**Recommendation**

The Social Work Department recommend that a Children’s Hearing be arranged. The key aspects of the care plan detailed therein are:

1. that a CSO be made in respect Liam, with Liam remaining at home during the week;
2. a measure of the CSO compelling Liam to reside with Aunt Phyllis Smith every Friday night

Anytown Local Authority should be named as the implementation authority.

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**Supports/Care Plan**

* Mrs Bruce accesses professional help to address her alcohol use
* a referral be made for bereavement counselling for Mrs Bruce
* Mrs Bruce to be supported to adequately meet Liam’s physical care, emotional and educational needs.
* Liam to be offered bereavement counselling and referral to befriending service.