



## Webinar – Case Study: Britney

Britney is a 16 year old female in Year 11 returning to school after a recent inpatient admission following a suicide attempt. While in hospital Britney was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder and upon discharge was referred to the local community mental health service for ongoing support. In the months before her suicide attempt, Britney moved out of the family home into supported medium term accommodation with child protection services involvement. Since Britney's admission, the School-Link Coordinator has been pulling together the various professionals to support effective collaboration for Britney.

### *Family situation*

Prior to moving into supported accommodation Britney lived with her mother Wendy and 8 year old brother Damien. Earlier in her childhood, Britney witnessed frequent and severe family violence perpetrated by her father against her mother which continued until her parents separated when she was 12 years of age. Britney has not had contact with her father since the separation. Britney's mother also has a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder, and longstanding challenges with alcohol and substance misuse. She struggles with feelings of guilt about the violence witnessed by her children and her sense that she failed to protect them and didn't leave the relationship sooner. For this reason she sometimes is very demanding to know how Britney is feeling, where she is and who she is with, and sometimes repeatedly asks her or phones or texts her to "check in". Her mother has been doing this in a way that shows care and concern but to Britney it feels like some of her autonomy and capacity to make her own choices is being challenged. This is confusing for Britney as at other times in the past, her mother has been withdrawn and emotionally unavailable. Over the years there have been numerous reports of neglect to the child protection agency.

### *School situation*

In the past school had always been a safe place for Britney. She found that it provided a way to escape from the intensity of her family situation. She has been a competent student with a particular interest and talent in visual art. Her year advisor reported that since commencing year 11, Britney has had difficulty concentrating in class and handing in assignments. Britney has been offered additional tutorial support to complete assessment tasks, as she is currently not meeting requirements for completion of the preliminary course. Her art teacher recently reported concerns about disturbing drawings that Britney made in class, which included images of self-harm. More recently Britney started seeking out her year advisor in a distressed state, and reporting to the first aid officers in the front office to have minor wounds dressed. The year advisor referred Britney to the school counsellor, who started working with her on a regular basis. The school counsellor collaborated on a safety plan with Britney, and shared aspects of this with the year advisor, deputy principal and the youth worker from the accommodation service. With Britney's permission the school counsellor made a referral to community mental health through the Mental Health Line for Britney a couple of days before her hospitalisation.

### *Peer relationships*

Increasingly Britney has found relationships with her peers challenging. She can be quite combative and angry, and struggles with "black and white" thinking, which often results in her getting into conflicts with her peers on social media in particular. She has had a few close friends over the years of high school but generally is perceived as an "outsider" and has found it difficult to fit in with a group. Her close friendships are often turbulent with her alternating between periods of being very close and then abruptly cutting off communication and withdrawing.

### *Support planning meeting*

The support planning meeting was attended by Britney, her community mental health clinician, the youth worker from the accommodation service, deputy principal, year advisor and school counsellor. Britney's community mental health clinician said that he was having weekly

appointments with Britney. Britney gave permission for the community mental health clinician and school counsellor to share details of the safety plans that had been discussed with each separately. The deputy principal said he would incorporate the strategies discussed into a draft risk management plan.