

Social Work Online Team Training (SWOTT) toolkit

An introduction to trauma-informed practice

LEARNING OBJECT 2: CASE STUDY 4: JOHN

John, a 15-year-old male, is labelled in school as a 'trouble maker.' He is constantly in isolation from his classes and there are times when he faces a short-term exclusion from school. John often becomes involved in arguments and low-level fights in school. He can be rude to the teachers especially when he perceives them as 'picking on him.' John struggles to concentrate, often stares out of the window, talks in class and, at times, he leaves the room to wander the corridors. He has a mild learning difficulty and stammer. School attendance has always been sporadic.

John's family history consists of a mother, Belinda, who was using illicit drugs whilst pregnant, and a father, Ben, who he has never met. For most of his childhood, John lived at home with his mother and older brother, Jack. He had an older sister, Jenny, who was estranged from the family. Belinda suffered from diabetes resulting in her requiring a wheel chair and substantial care. From the age of 10 years, John became a carer for his mother alongside his brother, Jack. There was no professional support in place. John nursed his mother at home until she died when he was aged 14. He was with her when she died at home.

Following Belinda's death, John was told that he would be living in the family home with his sister, Jenny, who had been estranged from the family for many years. Jenny became John's carer and had parental responsibility. He had a supportive girlfriend, Ruby, and maternal grandparents. John was referred for counselling in school.



Questions and prompts for reflection:

- What are your immediate thoughts regarding the label of 'trouble maker'?
- Consider the possible reasons behind John's behaviour and presentation in school.
- What if anything can the school offer him?
- Consider the trauma that John has suffered. How would you expect him to respond to the traumatic events in his life to date?
- Is there potential for post-traumatic growth? If so, what would support him with this?