Chapter 3: Social and Emotional Functioning in the Learning Environment

# Case Study

Lucy is six years of age and lives with her mother, a registered Class A drug user, her brother aged 5 and her baby sister aged 2. Lucy has never met her father. On most weeks Lucy is left to prepare meals for her brother and sister as her mother is frequently intoxicated by drugs or alcohol or has gone out with friends, often not returning until the early hours. Lucy spends time after school attending to her brother and sister and finds it difficult to go outside and play with her peers. The family have been known to Social Services since a referral was made by the Health Visitor and the Paediatrician following Lucy’s birth. Shortly after starting school, Lucy’s class teacher raised concerns with the head teacher about Lucy’s poor state of dress and about her strong preference to play by herself and to not mix with the other children. A referral is then made to the school’s educational psychologist who after carrying out an assessment of Lucy at her school calls for an immediate case review in order to put into place an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan. At the case review – attended by the educational psychologist, the paediatrician, the school social worker, head teacher, class teacher, and Lucy’s mum, with Lucy joining them for a time – it is acknowledged that Lucy is and has been experiencing significant neglect and feels unloved. The review panel agree the following action plan:

* The educational psychologist to informally review Lucy’s progress at school on each occasion when she visits the school, usually once per month.
* The school social worker will visit the home each week to determine the extent to which Lucy and her brother and sister’s learning and development are being affected by their mother’s addictions and behaviours.
* Lucy’s mother will self-refer to a specialist clinic for addiction with the support of her GP who will be sent a copy of the panel’s decision.
* The head teacher will provide from her school budget two hours per week additional time for Lucy to meet with one of the school’s Learning Support Assistants (LSA) for the rest of the term. With the help of the educational psychologist, this time will give Lucy an opportunity to talk about her anxieties and fears and help her develop self-confidence and self-efficacy.
* A further case review will be held at the end of the current school term to gauge progress.

## Activity

Consider what potential barriers the adults working with Lucy will face in implementing the recommendations. How might Lucy’s school work to improve practice in the future so that children like Lucy are supported in developing their holistic needs and realising their true academic potential?