

## ***Story vignettes***

---

The following story vignettes are used to trigger case discussion. The 'Can Do' for Young Mothers unit has two story vignettes to allow participants to explore issues that arise for young mothers with mental health and substance use issues from various perspectives.

The trigger questions for each story are to direct discussion and lead participants to think how they would include and support this mother and her child through their service and how they would access other relevant services.

Facilitators have additional discussion questions and notes for each story vignette.

Story A – Deanne

Story B – Ellie

## Story vignette A – Deanne

*"I've just found out I'm pregnant, I can't believe it. I'm only 20 years old, this wasn't supposed to happen til I was older. I thought I was safe cause we used a condom. My boyfriend Dave is pissed and thinks I should get rid of it. He gets so intense, I feel scared to say no to him, but I'm really not sure what to do.*

*He says the baby will be deformed anyway because of all the drugs we've been doing. I'm really paranoid about what the drugs have done to it. I hope it's ok. We've been into everything lately: E, speed, dope, plus the usual fags and grog.*

*Then Dave says that even if it's not deformed, I'll be no good as a mum... He says I'm depressed all the time anyway. I suppose he's right about me not being able to look after a baby – I haven't got a job, a house, any money, and I can't even see my own family anymore because of what dad did to me when I was a kid. I don't know what I'll do if Dave leaves too.*

*I think I want to keep the baby."*

### Points for discussion

1. What are the important issues here for Deanne and her unborn baby?
2. If Deanne was telling you this story, how would you engage with her?
3. What are the risks and what assessments might you use?
4. How would you prioritise the risks to Deanne and her unborn baby?
5. What interventions would be useful at this consultation?
6. What other therapeutic strategies might be helpful?
7. What support could local health services offer at this point, and how would you access them?

## Story vignette B – Ellie

*"I thought having a baby would make me feel better: someone to love me no matter what. It hasn't turned out the way I wanted. I'm only 15 and I feel terrible all the time.*

*I reckon I've been depressed and panicking since I was 12 years old. I went to the school counsellor but he just said I need to do more homework and then I wouldn't panic as much. Hell! If I could've done any more homework I wouldn't have been panicking in the first place.*

*Luckily I told a friend what was happening to me and she helped me a lot. She gave me some dope and I found it really relaxed me like nothing else could. I've been using it to block out the bad feelings for four years now. Well, that and binge drinking, but the drinking only started when I was 14 years old. That's kind of how I got pregnant with Brittany. Too many drinks I suppose with a guy from my class at school.*

*I tried not to drink so much when I was pregnant, but I couldn't give up the dope. I knew it was bad, but I just got so anxious. Somehow I made it through the pregnancy.*

*Brittany's 10 weeks old now and even though she's cute and everything I don't see how I can finish school and still look after her. A lot of my friends have really backed off, I don't reckon they can really understand what it's like for me at the moment – they just don't get it. All they think about is what party is happening this weekend, what they're going to wear tomorrow and stuff. Mum and dad are good, but they both have to work just to make ends meet. Sometimes I just feel like I can't do it anymore and that everything's hopeless. I don't know where to turn anymore. I don't know how this is all gonna work out"*

### Points for discussion

1. What are the important issues for Ellie and her baby?
2. What additional information would you seek from Ellie?
3. What is the problem that carries the most risk?
4. What interventions are possible, and who might coordinate these?
5. How can you ensure effective follow-up?
6. Would you involve Ellie's family? If so, what factors would you need to consider and how would you do this?
7. How could Ellie be effectively managed using the services and resources in your local area?