

COMPASS

COMPASS

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DPA

www.offtherecordcroydon.org

DPA

TALK TO US

OFF THE RECORD

06th April 2017

To whom it may concern,

Re: D1527 DOB DPA (Age disputed)

This letter has been written in support of my client, D1527 focusing on his mental health needs.

I am a UKCP accredited counsellor/psychotherapist and the Coordinator for the Compass Project, which is a specialist mental health service for young refugees, asylum seekers and forced migrants aged 11 - 25. We are a part of Off the Record Youth Counselling which has 20 years of experience providing support services to young people in Croydon. The Compass service is delivered within Croydon schools/colleges and within counselling provision at Off the Record Croydon. We provide individual counselling, group support and the training for professionals.

Compass is the primary mental health service for young refugees and asylum seekers in Croydon: 65% of our clients are unaccompanied minors. All counsellors in this service are experienced in assessing and supporting this particularly vulnerable client group. We are also experienced in working with complex loss, post-traumatic stress, anxiety, self-harm, suicide, depression and abuse.

D1527 has accessed our service in three different occasions. He was initially referred to us on 28/07/2014 by his key worker, Michael Akanmade, following a move from his foster carer to independent accommodation due to an age dispute. The referrer was concerned with D1527's difficulty in managing his emotions. He was offered ongoing counselling sessions then but struggled to make use of it due to him disassociating when discussing issues related to his past and his feelings. D1527 missed his next two appointments and his case was closed.

He was then referred again on 27/07/2015 by his personal advisor, Ruby Ahmed, due to concerns for his mental health and wellbeing. He was offered ongoing counselling sessions once more but struggled to use the sessions once more. D1527 disclosed feeling suicidal and having flashbacks connected to his past. On the 28/10/2015 D1527 left the room during the session due to feeling overwhelmed. Due to the risk connected to his suicidal ideation, his personal advisor was informed of the aggravation of D1527's state of mind.

Compass was informed on 06/11/2015 that D1527 was in hospital due to a suicide attempt.

Following his discharge from hospital and a Community Mental Health Team assessment, D1527 was once more offered ongoing counselling session with the support of Arslan Shahin, Mental Health Engagement Worker from Young Roots, who assisted D1527 to attend to his sessions.

D1527 has been offered weekly counselling sessions with myself since 03/12/2015 but has, once more, found difficult to attend regularly. During those sessions we have discussed how D1527 is currently dealing with his

issues and how this is leading those difficulties aggravating. We have tried to explore ways that [D1527] could manage those situations differently, but once more he continued to feel overwhelmed and to dissociate. He attended a total of 12 sessions and through this his mental health continued quite fragile. He displayed difficulties in trusting others, difficulties in concentrating, disassociation signs, possible flashbacks and intrusive memories.

With the support of Ben Feder, from South London Refugee Association, and other professionals [D1527] was moved to a different borough on his request. Unfortunately, there was no follow up on the mental health provision due to the lack of a local specialist service.

It is my professional opinion that [D1527] is a very vulnerable young man who is immensely troubled by his mental health issues including his traumatic life experiences. His low mood, difficulty in concentrating, disassociating process and avoidance behaviour have a direct and extremely negative impact on his ability to access help, engage with services and to maintain his commitments. His shame related to his past as well as his overwhelming feelings make him a very complex case to access as he might be unwilling to share some personal information to professionals he has not established a strong connection with. In my experience in working with other clients with similar backgrounds, those young people present an inability to engage or confront situations that could trigger emotions or memories related to their traumatic past experiences.

I strongly believe that, for his recovery, [D1527] needs intense and specialist support which can ensure that he is appropriately medicated and complying with his treatment as well as receiving the emotional support and therapeutic input he so desperately needs. Keeping this in mind I believe that is extremely dangerous for his young person to be detained in a place that does not provide this support.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further enquiries.

Yours Sincerely,

Signature

Tiago Brandao
Compass Co-ordinator