



Records tell us that Michelle is just 16 years old and has been known to agencies for many years in relation to her mother's learning disabilities, mental health problems and substance misuse.

Her mother, Claire, tells us that during a family argument Michelle screamed, 'Anyway, I'll be out of here soon. I'll be moving in with Jim, and we're having a baby!' Claire says she'll need help with the younger children if Michelle moves out.

The nurse from the local surgery tells us that Michelle is 6 months pregnant and has only recently attended the surgery under pressure from her partner, Jim, whom they understand to be a friend of Darren - Claire's partner. Apparently Michelle frequently misses appointments and the records show that she was not brought for appointments as a baby or younger child. On the basis of a couple of short meetings there are already some concerns. Michelle is a heavy smoker, but says she is totally hooked and could never give up, and anyway, it will be an easier birth if the baby is smaller. She also says it helps stop her getting too fat, and Jim wouldn't love her if she was fat. She says she doesn't need any advice about babies because she had to look after her siblings all the time because her mother is a 'junkie'.

The local school records indicate that Michelle had enjoyed primary school, and although was often late, attended regularly. Her attainment was in line with the average for her class. At secondary school her attendance rates fell dramatically. A range of efforts were made by the school to tackle this, with little success. Her reading remained at the level it was when she left primary school and she made minimal progress in other subjects. She virtually ceased attending school from 15.



- 1994 Michelle born. Single parent family. Her mother, Claire, has some learning disabilities; mental health problems and misusing substances.
- 1995 Michelle's immunisations not completed.
- 1996 Michelle seen at GP surgery with mother who had a black eye? A happy, lively two year old.
- 1997 Appointment for pre-school immunisation missed.
- 1998 Half-brother, Troy, born. Michelle immunised. Query re hearing. Michelle starts Primary School. Regular attendance.
- 1999 Satisfactory progress in class; but often late. Teacher reports Michelle is always trying to catch up with other pupils. Tries hard. Often on her own.
- 2000
- 2001
- 2002 Troy, her brother sees his father.
- 2003 Mother's new partner - Darren - moves in to live with the family. Michelle moving to Secondary School in the summer. Missed introductory visit. Darren is getting her school uniform. Troy's grandmother says she will get his.
- 2004 Sister Susan born. Learning disabilities? Physical disabilities? Michelle moves to Secondary School. Attendance good. Often seems distracted. Linked with a peer educator for 6 months.

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- 2005 Attendance poor. Parent invited to Parents' Evening. No response. No parental contact before or after school. Primary School report that Michelle takes her brother in each morning. Her brother waits at the school gate for Michelle to collect him. Michelle says that Darren says that this is her job. Mother's partner confronts Headteacher of Primary School about her questions about Michelle dropping off and collecting Troy from school.
- 2006 Michelle shares her bedroom with Susan, her 3 year old sister. Injury to her left hand – lowering side of cot to lift her sister out. Not able to complete written work because of bruising. Clothes crumpled but cleanish. Susan checked for squint. Appointment arranged with ophthalmologist.
- 2007 Brother Ryan born. Possible fetal alcohol syndrome. Nursery informed about baby crying in family home. No lights on or movement. Mother in neighbour's house all evening. Ryan's father not around. Troy reported to be wandering around the neighbourhood. Family Support worker provides practical support in the family home. Troy is linked with a befriender.
- 2008 Significant concerns about Michelle's school attendance. She arrives late and leaves early. In class, she seems to be totally preoccupied. Her teachers find it difficult to get through to her. Family Support worker reports improvements in family life. Family to get further support from local nursery, where Ryan has a place on three days of every week.
- 2009 Mother pregnant. Family move to stay with Jim and his mother. Troy stays with his grandparents. Community Police Officer tells Darren that Troy is stealing cars.
- 2010 Sister Kimberley born. She is not demanding. Michelle, aged 16, is found to be 6 months pregnant when she attends the G.P. surgery. Jim, aged 30, says he is the father and that Michelle will be a great mum as she is naturally caring so will do whatever the baby needs. Darren states that Kimberley is a good baby and that Claire is a great mother and that he, as the father, will provide whatever is needed; and Michelle is still there to help out whenever they need her help.



“I love Jim, and he loves me...”

He lives with his mum just now, but when our baby's here we'll be getting our own house. Jim's going to get his other children to live with us and we'll be a proper family. He isn't like my mum and Darren - ok he likes a bit of a smoke just like me, but we're not junkies, we know how to say 'no'.

Darren is a bit of a creep, Jim says he's a good bloke, but he's really bossy to my mum and all of us - I'll be glad to be away from him, although I am worried about the other kids. They could come and stay with us sometimes though.

I know I'll be a good mum not like my mum. I'll make sure my kid goes to school and gets qualifications and a good job and a house and car. I couldn't keep up at school because I missed too much when I stayed at home to help with the little kids. Anyway, the teachers didn't like me and the other girls didn't like me - they called me fat and smelly.

I'm fed up with social workers always coming round - they never helped my mum one bit. The nurses are the same. Jim says I should make sure his baby is all right so I did go, but the nurse was really nosy and cheeky about my weight.

If everyone gets off my back I'll be fine.”

Michelle Henderson's story

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