

Learning from Case Reviews 2020

Taking a family approach

- Risk escalates quickly – where there is a combination of **domestic abuse, mental health issues and / or substance misuse**
- Commonality of combination of issues in families, and increased risk of significant harm
- High risks posed to others as well as 'subject' of the casework. This includes wider family members and children where a combination of these issues is present
- Early identification and intervention reduces risk of harm
- There is a need for further understanding of the impact of coercive control on families
- Growing evidence that domestic abuse can cause serious long-term emotional effects on children

Disguised Compliance and hostility of parents / carers

- Importance of **professional curiosity** – suspect something? Triangulate!
- Intentional deception - minimising/denying abuse and neglect.
- Some parents / carers engage well with one set of professionals, for example in education, which can deflect attention from a lack of engagement with other services
- Professionals should not be overly optimistic about progress, delaying timely interventions for families
- Aggressive/intimidating family members can influence responses in that professionals can become hesitant or not challenge lack of progress

Regular and Effective supervision

- Should be a priority for agencies working with children, families and adults at risk.
- Effective supervision is important to promote good standards of practice and to support individual staff members.
- Positive impact on service users: Research shows that good quality supervision keeps focus on the child. Avoids the drifting of cases and has continuous management oversight, provides the employee with an opportunity to 'debrief'
- Each agency should have a written policy for the supervision of staff which reflects SSCP Supervision standards

The importance of using relevant history to inform current practice and recording it! (Chronologies)

- Good quality chronologies that identify risk factors are the basis for good analysis and assessment.

- Ability for multi-agency professionals to consider them at all levels of intervention is important
- Chronologies assist with the identification of patterns of behaviour which can lead to crisis for a family or identify cumulative impact of abuse/neglect – take time to be curious
- Include qualitative information, analysis and narrative
- Consider family history to form a holistic view

The importance of the voice of the adult and child

- See in person the child or adult at risk – in the place or context of exploitation and abuse
- Teenagers should not elicit any less response than a younger child, their voice should be sought and heard

- Parents or carer's voices should not overshadow
- Consider the daily lived experience of the child or adult at risk i.e. impact of abuse and neglect and the potential long term significant harm.
- Be alive to non-verbal means of communication, e.g. actions, reactions, or silence, or inability to engage with the child due to the parent or care giver.
- ' – actions, reactions, unsaid responses.

Impact of Neglect and Self Neglect

- Early intervention is a key factor in reducing harm – long term impact = higher risk of harm
- Domestic Abuse, substance misuse, mental health often coexists with neglect = rise in risk of serious harm
- Be aware of educational neglect – read the [guidance](#)

- Housing issues such as rent arrears and anti-social behaviour apparent in many neglect cases
- There is a link between experience of neglect as a child and in adolescence, and then self-neglect as an adult

Safer Sleep (link to Lullaby Trust)

- Risk of overlay increased when a parent sleeps on a sofa, armchair or airbed with a baby
- Increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome if parents have been drinking alcohol or taking drugs when bed sharing with a baby

- Risks of co-sleeping are also increased if a baby is premature (born before 37 weeks), or has a low birth weight (less than 2.5kg or 5.5lb)
- Clear messages needed from professionals for families around safe sleep
- Professionals should consider sleeping arrangements in their work with families and ask to see these

Unidentified adults within, or connected and/or visiting the family home can pose a risk to children and young people – BE CURIOUS

Good communication and planning between agencies and with service users

- Need to establish common goals when decision making and care planning – with the family
- Goals, progress and processes including Public law Outline must be tracked to prevent drift and delay
- Effective communication and healthy working relationships are important part of good multiagency practice
- Practitioners need to be clear that safeguarding/child protection concerns override data protection legislation
- Clarity of lead professional role is needed, along with clear roles and responsibilities for each professional working with the family
- Information should be shared between schools where necessary when siblings attend different schools

Child Sexual abuse within a family environment (CSAFE)

- Professional awareness of indicators of risk and specialist responses is key
- CSAFE not always noticed until disclosed – other presenting factors (i.e. neglect) are noticed first
- Some children and young people may try to seek help indirectly
- Children and young people may attempt to seek help in non-verbal ways
- Prior Child Sexual Abuse may be a risk factor for Child Sexual Exploitation.
- Multi agency CSAFE training now available

Escalation

- *'Safeguarding is everyone's business... until the child /individual is safe'*
- A need to constructively challenge if response is inadequate – this is both within own and across agencies
- Use [HIPS](#) / 4LSAB procedures
- Key factor in promoting the welfare of our children and adults at risk.

For more details on all safeguarding and child protection procedures:

- Go to [HIPS Procedures](#) and register for updates
- Contact Safeguarding Partnership Team for more information
 - Tel: 023 8083 2955
 - Email: safeguarding.partnershipsteam@southampton.gov.uk

For safeguarding adults procedures please go to [4LSAB procedures](#)

