

Child L Learning Briefing



How this document can be used

- Please read this document carefully and consider the learning in respect of families you are currently working with.
- Keep this document in a handy place to support easy reference in future work.
- Take this document to team meetings and share with colleagues.
- Use this document in supervisions for reference and to support case management / reflective practice.

Case Summary

In 2017 the NCSCB completed a learning review on a case where significant concerns were raised about home conditions following the unexpected death of an infant. The death was in no way connected to the home conditions, however professionals responding to the death felt that the severity of the home conditions were such that they warranted review.

Learning

The review identified that the children living within the home were well nourished, presented as clean and well cared for, and the school-aged child was well engaged in school and parents were ensuring good attendance. Nonetheless, the review determined that there were three strands of learning for all practitioners to consider within their everyday practice.

Engagement

Issues present in this case:

- Problematic engagement patterns, missed appointments, or frequently rescheduled appointments. Late cancellations or refused entry appointments. The fact that parent hadn't disengaged completely impacted on the professional response.
- Professional response:
 - Telephoned the parent / rearranged appointments
 - Wrote to the family
 - Employed opportunistic visiting
 - Left cards
 - Combined appointments.

Learning

None of the above actually led to meaningful engagement, they did not effect change. The review highlighted the need to:

- Have frank and honest conversations with families, especially about why you are visiting.
- Be clear about agreed responses following a visit.
- Articulate concerns and set out clearly the expected terms of engagement.
- Apply a Signs of Safety framework.
- Avoid opportunistic visiting where engagement is problematic. Whilst sometimes useful – opportunistic visiting should not be seen as a way of evidencing non-engagement.
- Always have a clear purpose and desired outcome for each planned visit, share this with the family. Ensure the above interventions are clearly documented.

Effective responses to anonymous referrals

Issues present in this case:

- Anonymous referrals present particular challenges for the receiving agency, especially when the worker tasked with examining the concerns cannot have a direct dialogue with the referrer.
- In this case the identity of the referrer was known to the person who initially took the call, and to a professional in another agency who supported them to make the call, but who did not make themselves known.

Learning

- Every effort should be made to support the referrer to feel confident in sharing their details, whilst reassuring them that they will remain anonymous to the family. This allows for direct dialogue, for clarification and exploration of the issues, by the worker allocated to follow up on the referral.
- If you are supporting a member of the public to make a referral always make your presence known to the receiving agency, and supply your details. Again this allows for a future dialogue when responding to the referral.
- Equal weight should be given to anonymous referrals as those of professionals and known persons.
- Guard against assuming the position that anonymous referrals are likely to be malicious.
- Avoid relying on parental self-reporting to discount concerns raised in anonymous referrals.

Collaborative Working

The benefit of collaborative working with housing providers

Issues present in this case:

- The housing provider had received environmental complaints about the property. Following attempts to engage with the family and provide support, enforcement action was being taken.

Learning

- Where environmental concerns are present and children live within the household, housing providers and primary health should consider collaborative working to support the family to address the issues improve the environmental concerns.

For more information about learning from reviews please visit the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board website at www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/ncscb