

# Significant Incident Learning Review

## Briefing Note for Agencies Re. Child V



### Introduction

This is the third briefing note compiled by the NCSCB in response to a Learning Review.

### Case Summary

Child V was 12 years old when she was removed from the care of her family and placed into foster care. Concerns had been reported to Children's Social Care in respect of the care the family were providing, living conditions at home and instances of Emotional Abuse. There had been five previous referrals of a similar nature over a seven year period. Reports of the of the emotional abuse suffered include : Enforced social isolation through being locked in her bedroom for long periods of time. Segregation from other family members and family activities. Restrictions of fluids and certain foods; name calling, humiliation, denied access to a toilet and clothing, inappropriate behaviour management techniques used for her age and level of distress.

### Findings

A summary of the findings can be found below, with more detail set out under the key headings overleaf.

### Summary

The SILP review identified similar issues to previous reviews including;

- The variable quality and effectiveness of assessments lacking depth and analysis.
- The rationale and evidence base for decision making was not always recorded or set within the context of known risks, or historic information.
- The effectiveness of multi-agency work was compromised when not underpinned by clear actions plans, with timescales and contingencies that are shared with all agencies involved.
- Work could have been improved by enhancing the voice of the child, directly and indirectly in work and assessments. Using information and observations to better understand their experiences of living in this household.
- Procedure was not properly followed; when work is not compliant with procedures this is intrinsically unsafe for children.
- Specialist consultation should always consider wider safeguarding circumstances and remain child focused.
- When parents are challenging or difficult to engage, the impact of this must be considered in a safeguarding context.
- Workers focused on individual aspects of the case presentation instead of the wider safeguarding needs and risks to the child.

- Workers struggled to frame the Emotional Abuse in this case, becoming more focused on behaviour.
- There was significant delay in referral and failure to effectively engage with escalation processes.

### **In Respect of Assessments**

#### **Assessment must:**

- Consider all historical information.
- Focus on the impact on the child, including behaviour.
- Be holistic.
- Involve **all** carers and significant individuals.
- Evidence clear assessment of risk.
- See problematic behaviour as a possible indicator of abuse.
- Consider all components of a referral and not focus solely on the main presenting issues.

#### **Practitioners must:**

- See the child alone, if blocked from seeing the child alone, see this as an issue and seek management advice.
- Be able to frame or provide descriptors of emotional abuse.
- Use the emotional abuse framework with practice guidance.
- Understand the wider complexities of a child's history and experiences to fully understand their diversity needs.
- Consider using a structured approach and the use of tools to support assessment of a child's diversity needs.

### **In Respect of the Quality of Decision Making**

- The rationale for decisions needs to be clearly evidenced.
- The original reason for referral must be properly considered during all decision making.
- A lack of engagement must lead to heightened concerns and risk ratings of cases.
- Decisions to close case must be driven by needs being met and not influenced by poor engagement.

### **In Respect of Managing Work with Resistant and Obstructive Parents**

- There is a need for a clear focus on what needs to change for the child and actual evidence that this has changed before involvement ceases and concerns de-escalated.
- Lack of engagement should not be a reason to stop involvement and close a case.
- Lack of engagement and refusal of permission to speak with a child should be seen as a safeguarding issue.
- Whatever the methods of engagement there needs to be a clear focus on outcomes for the child(ren).

### **In Respect of the Extent, Quality and Effectiveness of Engagement with Children**

- Children need to be seen in a way that optimises meaningful engagement.
- Blocks and barriers to engagement with children should be viewed as a safeguarding issue.

- An understanding of family relationships and family dynamics should be explored and built up over time, not based on very limited information.

### **In Respect of Co-ordination and Action Planning in a Multi-Agency Framework**

Multi-agency meetings must:

- Be clearly recorded using NCSCB guidance.
- Result in agreed actions.
- Set review date.
- Remain involved until change is evidenced.

If there is **no change within reasonable timescales for the child**, further actions should be agreed and consideration given to a safeguarding referral and / or invocation of escalation procedures.

### **In Respect of Early Effective Safeguarding**

- Specialist consultation should always consider and record safeguarding issues in full. Section 47 procedures should always be completed in line with NCSCB / NSCB procedures. When work is not compliant with procedures this is intrinsically unsafe for children.
- Thorough assessments should be undertaken when a parent resumes care of their child, when there have been significant concerns previously about their ability to parent safely.
- The fact that therapeutic or support services are involved with a young person should not be seen as a reason not to pursue child protection concerns as a parallel process.
- All agencies must follow escalation processes when they are not satisfied with the response of Children's Social Care.
- When Police safe and well visits are agreed, they need to be clear and outcome focused.
- Escalation Processes must be applied where the response of partner agencies is not considered appropriate to the level of concern.

### **How to use this document**

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

### **Useful references links:**

NCSCB/NSCB Safeguarding Procedures

<http://nottinghamshirescb.proceduresonline.com/index.htm>

NCSCB/NSCB Emotional Abuse Practice Guidance

<http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=49654&p=0>

NCSCB Guidance for effective Multi Agency Meetings - **add link ( not yet available)**