

## Children's Practice Review Child D1 Practitioner Learning Brief

### Background

Child D1 was subject to a Child Protection Plan due to Sexual Abuse, and subsequently removed from the care of her parents. School made several referrals to Children's Social Care and historical police checks showed mother's partner may pose a risk to Child D1. Assessments and S47 enquiries followed which found that Child D1 had, by this point, been sexually abused. There were 2 men in Child D1's home life; her father and mother's partner. Initial assessment work failed to consider mother's partner or the risk he posed.

### Themes

#### Escalation

- Professionals had concerns for Child D1 for over 2 years and 6 child protection referrals were received before appropriate safeguarding enquiries and responses were initiated
- Child D1 was displaying challenging emotional and educational behavioural difficulties
- Child D1 had 4 unaccepted referrals before s47 enquiries were initiated.
- Staff failed to follow escalation processes.

#### Learning & Behavioural Difficulties

- Child D1 was known to exhibit sexualised behaviours in school, which was wrongly attributed to her having a learning difficulty – this assumption negatively influenced the case progression.
- The focus on a possible diagnosis of Child D1's learning needs and a possible Autism diagnosis distracted from the risks of sexual abuse and safeguarding concerns were not effectively assessed.

#### Record Keeping & Information Sharing

- Reported concerns about distressing sexualised behaviour were not discussed between Children's Social Care and Police.
- Police did not record the outcomes of strategy meetings.
- Information sharing within the health economy is complex due to different recording systems and processes.

#### Voice of the Child

- There were 4 occasions where bruising and or marks were seen on Child D1. On each occasion Children's Services visited the family and based on the explanation provided by the parents took no further action.
- The voice of the child was not given proper consideration
- Child D1 verbally and non verbally disclosed physical and sexual abuse which was mainly recognised by the school.

#### Good Practice

Schools involved were proactive in engaging the family in relevant meetings and also sharing information with other agencies.

#### Good Practice

The tenacity of the school staff, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Worker and School Nurse in promoting Child D1's welfare.

## What did we learn?

- It is important to distinguish between developmentally expected sexual behaviours from those that could be inappropriate or problematic. Sexualised behaviours that occur more frequently than would be developmentally expected, interfere with the child's development or are linked to emotional distress should be a cause for concern.
- Many children are unable to communicate that they are experiencing sexual abuse. Children with learning needs may be more vulnerable to abuse and often less able to speak out as they may not understand what is happening to them and may have difficulty with communication. To allow effective assessment of safeguarding concerns, children should be given time to communicate and be supported to articulate their experiences in whatever way is best for them.
- When professionals have a difference of opinion regarding a safeguarding concern, they should follow the RBSCP Escalation Policy until they are satisfied that all areas of their concern have been fully considered and addressed and that the child is being made safe.

## What needs to happen?

- Ensure you are aware of safeguarding policies and procedures regarding sexual abuse/sexualised behaviours.
- For guidance on responding to sexualised behaviours go to [NSPCC -Responding to children who display sexualised behaviour](#), [What's normal? - Stop It Now](#) and [Stop It Now - Children's Behaviours](#)
- Escalate any concerns in accordance with the RBSCP Escalation Policy. Ensure that you are fully aware and understand this process.
- Make sure that all records fully reflect the child's circumstances, concerns and actions taken and all relevant information is shared appropriately
- If you suspect a child is being harmed or is at risk being of harmed call 0300 303 0440 to report your concerns.

Click here to access the  
[GM Policy -Harmful Sexual Behaviours  
Presented by Children and Young People](#)

Click here to book on the  
Neglect Training  
[Rochdale Safeguarding Events](#)

Click here to access  
[RSCP Escalation Policy](#)

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