



Child Safeguarding Practice Review

Executive Summary

Child Bm

Independent Reviewer

Allison Sandiford

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1. Introduction and Process

1.1. This Review has been commissioned following a decision by the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Rapid Review Group that, in accordance with Working Together to Safeguard Children¹, this case met the criteria for a Child Safeguarding Practice Review.

1.2. Allison Sandiford was appointed as lead reviewer. Allison is an independent safeguarding consultant with a legal background. She gained experience in safeguarding whilst working for a police service and since 2019 (when Allison left the police force) she has conducted serious case reviews and safeguarding practice reviews in both children's and adults safeguarding, and domestic homicide reviews. Allison does not have any links to Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, or any of the partner agencies.

1.3. Membership of the panel established to oversee this review is shown at Appendix 1. Agency representation, terms of reference, the scoping period and the project plan were decided at an initial scoping and first panel meeting which convened on the 4th of October 2023.

1.4. The panel met on two further occasions to discuss the case and learning and to monitor the progress of the review. The review has also incorporated a practitioner learning event which was attended by professionals from the key agencies who have worked with Child BM. Contribution from the participants generated discussion around both good practice and areas of practice that could be developed and improved; these discussions have formed the basis of this report.

1.5. The participation and opinion of those subject to a Child Safeguarding Practice Review and of their family members, is an important aspect of the review process as their personal experiences of services provided proves invaluable. Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership wrote to Child BM's mother to notify her of this review and offer the opportunity for family and/or Child BM to participate in the process. The independent reviewer and Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership would like to thank Child BM's mother for her time and contributions, which are woven into the body of this report.

2. Analysis and Learning Pertaining to the Key Lines of Enquiry

2.1. The review has explored the following Key Lines of Enquiries:

- How professionals understood, and recognised signs of Child Sexual Exploitation? And how professionals responded (including the police service). What did the support offer look like?
- What was the quality of strategy discussion and the Child and Family Assessment – was assessment robust enough to support effective decision-making?
- How professionals understood Child BM's lived experience and heard Child BM's voice
- How did agencies work together to safeguard Child BM from harm?
- How did professionals identify and assess protective factors?
- How was personal student information transferred when Child BM changed school?
- Were there any missed opportunities?

2.2. And as a result of

- the information shared with this review by agencies,

¹ HM Government (2018) Working Together to Safeguard Children
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942454/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_inter_agency_guidance.pdf.

- professionals' discussions at the learning event and panel meetings, and
- conversation with Child BM's mother,

the following learning has been generated:

Learning 1: Lower level support options which could have been offered to Child BM and her family (to support them to protect Child BM from online sexual abuse) were potentially overlooked when professionals did not utilise the Rise support available.

Learning 2: Professionals did not use the full range of support options available to them which resulted in a missed opportunity to better understand the risks to Child BM and the support available (if for example, the Child Sexual Exploitation Toolkit had been used).

Learning 3: (When it was used), the Child Sexual Exploitation Toolkit assessment offered insight into Child BM's views and risk of exploitation.

Learning 4: A missed opportunity to convene a strategy discussion resulted in potential delay to multi-agency information sharing and multi-agency consideration of risk.

Learning 5: Improvements must be made to ensure that strategy minutes are being sent to, and received by, all agencies.

Learning 6: Action plans developed within strategy discussions can drift. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 directs that actions should be followed up; it is therefore a good idea to set a date for a review of the discussion.

Learning 7: Ongoing consideration should be given as to how professionals engage with absent fathers/stepfathers who have been significant in a child's earlier life.

Learning 8: Section 47 checks of other agencies must identify wider professional sources who can support risk assessment and intervention.

Learning 9: It is important to explore children's relationships with others as they are an important factor which affects their general wellbeing.

Learning 10: Concerns for a young person should always be escalated (if appropriate) to allow multi-agency consideration and planning of a support offer.

3. Learning to be Addressed.

3.1. This review hopes that its reflection upon professionals understanding of Child BM will serve as a driver of change moving forward and will lead us to better practice. In order to address the learning, the review would ask Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership to deliberate the following questions and to use the ensuing debate to model an action plan to support improvements to systems and practice.

Question 1: How can Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership be assured that professionals from all agencies understand the referral processes into the new multi-agency Child Exploitation team and the benefits of seeking guidance and advice from the team when a referral cannot be made.

Question 2: How can Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (on behalf of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) and the Integrated Care Board work together with GPs in their area to gain an understanding of GP's knowledge and experience of safeguarding practice, and how this can influence their support with Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub process.

Outcomes should be conveyed to Quality and Governance and the Local Learning Review Sub Group.

Question 3: How can Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership be assured that the improvements that have already been made to strategy discussion processes are ensuring that strategy minutes and actions are being communicated to, and received by, all agencies (including GPs) involved with the child and family.

Question 4: How can partner agencies assure Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership that section 47 checks are identifying wider professional and familial sources who can support risk assessment and intervention?

3.2. And that the agencies involved address the following learning identified (by themselves) within this review process:

Single Agency Recommendations

3.2.1. Training for schools around the importance of recording conversations within records - school reflected that in order to ensure better practice in the future, pupils records must include robust documentation of safeguarding discussions and plans.

3.2.2. Northamptonshire Children's Trust may wish to promote their training around absent fathers/adults as part of their learning from this review.

Appendix 1

Panel Membership:

- Head of Safeguarding, Integrated Care Board (chair)
- Specialist Nurse for Safeguarding Children and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust
- Project Officer, Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (minutes)
- Specialist Safeguarding Midwife, British Pregnancy Advisory Service
- Service Manager and Principal Social Worker, Social Work Academy, Northamptonshire Children's Trust
- Detective Chief Inspector, Northamptonshire Police
- Safeguarding in Education Manager, North Northamptonshire Council
- Independent Scrutineer, Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children and Children in Care, Integrated Care Board
- Partnership and Review Manager, Northamptonshire Police
- Independent Reviewer (chair)