

Single Agency Review Child V

6 Step Briefing

The Background

Child V aged 7 and younger sibling aged 2 were subject to child protection plans due to domestic abuse by the father in 2013/14 for emotional and physical abuse. The schools led on a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) in the period covered by the review due to concerns regarding mother's ability to protect and meet the needs of the children.

Safeguarding Concerns

Concerns and risk increased when Child V kept saying, at school, that her father keeps returning to the family home. Child V's behaviour deteriorated; presenting very difficult behaviours, sexualised behaviours and targeting specific individuals, including the younger sibling. Whilst this information was known to Safeguarding Children Services, the case was stepped down to a CAF to the schools.

The Incident

Rather than a specific incident, this covers a time period of approximately 6 months, where father has moved back into the family home following the child protection case being closed.

Child V's behaviour deteriorated to the extent that they were excluded from Primary School on several occasions and some of the behaviours were described as mirroring the father's behaviours. Some of Child V's behaviours were highly sexualised and Child V had created a very explicit drawing within one of their lessons.

The Review

A single agency Learning Exercise was led by Safeguarding Children's Services to review the joint audit of the case and amalgamate the learning which may have a direct impact on future practice when working with children who are living in neglectful circumstances with parental disguised compliance. All participants openly and robustly engaged in the discussions.

The Findings

- * This case would have benefited from consistent and rigorous social work intervention, and child protection processes followed appropriately.
- * There were minimal social work visits – both announced and unannounced, with an over reliance on mother's self reporting rather than assessing the daily lived experience of the children and home environment, despite them being subject to Child Protection Plans.
- * Safeguarding Children's Services to consider the appropriate point and method used to step down cases; there was no chronology which would have helped provide a holistic view of this family.
- * The school had a wealth of information regarding this family and disclosures made by Child V, including the incident regarding the explicit drawing, but this was not shared with the allocated Social Worker.
- * The voice of the child needed to be assessed holistically; not only being reliant on verbal disclosures, but also in terms of assessing the child's deteriorating behaviours and presentation.

The Findings cont'd...

- * The school had concerns regarding the mother's attachment to Child V but this was not explored within the social work assessment.
- * There was a general lack of sharing information and lack of effective communication within multi agency meetings such as Core Group meetings.
- * There was minimal information known about the father despite Child V's disclosures and despite there being involvement from mental health services previously.

Recommendations

- * Social Worker's need to ensure Child Protection plans are progressed in a timely manner and are child focused and cover the child's holistic needs. Plans must be SMART and the outcomes reviewed and measured.
- * There needs to be clear and consistent evidence and practice of the step down process/structure.
- * Once a case is stepped down there still needs to be scrutiny of the family dynamics and presentation.
- * Safeguarding Children's Services and the school need to jointly review and examine the concerns and evidence regarding Child V's sexualised behaviour's and put appropriate steps in place to address.
- * The school and health visiting service need to offer robust challenge and hold other agencies to account and where deemed necessary escalate any unresolved issues in the interest of the children.
- * Schools need to view children holistically and share information with Safeguarding Children's Services. Where appropriate. Incidents should not be viewed or dealt with in silo.

Good Practice and Evidence as a result of this Audit and similar Reviews

In May 2016, the NSCB launched the new Neglect Toolkit which uses the Graded Care Profile. Please click [here](#) to access.

As part of the NSCB eLearning package the course 'Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect' is available and can be taken free of charge by all practitioners using the self registration system or logging in [here](#).