

Serious Case Review

6 Step Briefing

Children Ag

The Background

The mother of Ag children was in a violent relationship and the children were at risk of harm.

Safeguarding Concerns

The children had witnessed previous domestic violence between mother and her partner and there were concerns around keeping the children safe as the mother appeared to want to remain with the partner. Plans were put in place by the school and probation from when the partner was due to be released from prison, but conditions agreed as a result of closing the Child Protection Plans were not adhered to.

The Incident

When mother's partner was released from prison, he was not supposed to return to the family home until it was known that he had been drug free for a period of several months. This was not monitored and he returned to the home immediately after release. A domestic violence incident took place in the family home which the children witnessed and one child attempted to intervene to help their mother.

The Review

The case was considered by the Serious Case Review Sub Group and it was agreed learning could be identified and a Case Mapping Exercise was agreed. Agencies across the partnership provided a wealth of rich information that supported robust discussion at the workshop to identify the learning and recommendations.

The Findings

- As part of the step down process, the Child Protection Chair had asked for various actions to be completed. This did not happen. The Child Protection Chair attended the third Child In Need meeting, which was routine practice at that time, to raise these concerns and they were not taken forward. In addition, the Social Work Assessment should have been updated and was not.
- The original referral for this case was regarding Domestic Violence, however, this became completely lost as Social Care professionals focused on mother's drug use and father being in prison.
- Records indicate mother was engaging in programmes of support, however, this was self-reported, and there was no formal documentation to evidence this.
- It is not known whether a parenting risk assessment was undertaken as there are no records regarding this.
- Health records detail no information regarding the Child Protection Conference or Core Groups and it is not clear as to whether they were invited or did not attend.
- Professionals felt the step down from Child Protection to Child In Need was appropriate, however, they felt the further step down from Child In Need to Early Help was not appropriate.
- Several meetings took place in very quick succession and agency records appear to have different dates as to when meetings actually took place, who attended and minutes, along with actions are missing.

The Findings continued

- Agencies did not know father was being released from prison. There is a process in place whereby Probation will inform MASH if they consider the perpetrator to be a risk to children, however, on this occasion, the process was not used and information not shared.
- Agencies should receive copies of minutes from Child Protection Conferences and Core Groups. Copies of the notes and written agreements should be circulated to core group members within five working days of the core group meeting. Implementation of the child protection plan must begin immediately. If notes are not distributed as required, agencies should use the NSCB escalation procedure:
http://northamptonshirescb.proceduresonline.com/p_conflict_res.html
- Mother did not engage very well with The Sunflower Centre – if colleagues had known of the positive relationship the Family Support Worker had with mother, they could have forwarded information to mother via the Family Support Worker.

Good Practice:

- The excellent work undertaken by the school Family Support Worker who worked extremely well to engage mother and go above and beyond to provide additional support when required.
- The worker from S2S regularly updated the Social Worker with updates on the father's progress, his engagement and drug test results.
- The actions from the most recent MARAC were all regarding engagement of father and work for him to undertake. This is positive as often the actions tend to focus on the victim rather than the perpetrator.

Recommendations

1. At the beginning of all Child Protection minutes, Child Protection Plans and Child In Need Plans there should be a clear, consistent record of the significant reason why the case was originally referred. This is to ensure that reason does not get lost and remains a constant thread throughout the child's journey with services.
2. When a parent undertakes work to improve their parenting capacity, routine practice should be that the Social Worker must complete an updated Social Work assessment including details of what work has been undertaken, how the parents have changed as a result of the intervention and what impact this has had on the children. Partner agencies challenge whether this always happens and it certainly did not happen with this case.
3. Following a Child Protection Conference or Core Group, minutes are circulated to all attendees and those who have given apologies within two weeks of the meeting date. If an agency does not receive a copy of the minutes, they must follow up with the social worker. If they continue to not receive the minutes, the escalation process confirms concerns should be raised with the Practice Manager, Team Manager and then ultimately the Service Manager. This process needs to be circulated to partners to ensure they understand and have access to the process.

Good Practice and Evidence as a result of this Review and similar Review

Current practice for when a case is stepped down by Safeguarding Children's Services now means that the Child Protection Chair no longer attends the third Child In Need meeting. It is attended by the Social Worker and either the Practice Manager or the Team Manager should chair the meeting. This is to allow oversight of the previous three months and ensure plans are in place for the next three months. (Ideally children would not be on a Child In Need Plan for longer than six months).

It is now business as usual that a Team, within Safeguarding Children's Services, has to review the Child In Need Plan and authorise the Plan on Carefirst.

The Domestic Abuse Notification Scheme now notifies schools and Health Visitors when police have been called to a domestic violence incident where children are resident. Further details can be found on the NSCB website or by clicking [here](#).

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