



Learning Lessons Briefing Serious Case Review in respect of Child P

BACKGROUND

Child P is serving a life sentence for the rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl (Child N) in April 2018 which he committed when he was 16 years old. He was known to services in Wolverhampton at the time. Child P was jailed for life on 22 February 2019.

A Serious Case Review was commissioned (under Working Together 2015, the statutory guidance in place in April 2018) by Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children Board in relation to the victim and the full overview report can be accessed at:

https://www.wolverhamptonsafeguarding.org.uk/images/Serious_Case_Review_for_Child_N_final.pdf

The criteria for a serious case review under Working Together 2015 were not met for Child P nor was there any requirement to conduct a review via the Youth Justice Service. In view of there being no grounds for a statutory partner review, the Learning Review Committee agreed to progress a multi-agency table top review. The table top review sought to ascertain the involvement of agencies with Child P and to determine if any lessons could be learned about the way in which professionals work together to safeguard children in Wolverhampton.

LEARNING THEMES AND WHAT THEY MEAN FOR YOUR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Theme 1 – Holistic Assessment and Information Sharing

It was evident from the information shared at the table top review that a number of agencies had been involved with Child P and his family. However, the approach to assessment within each agency was neither joined up nor multi agency; and led to decisions being made in isolation; without consideration for wider safeguarding issues. It was not clear who was the lead professional.

Where there *were* opportunities for information to be shared between agencies and a more holistic assessment of the family to be completed, this did not happen due to misunderstanding of the law around information sharing.

There were discrepancies between what the family self- reported during assessments, and what was subsequently observed by professionals. However, this was not analysed or considered from a safeguarding perspective, and there was an overall lack of professional curiosity.

Assessments did not incorporate a whole family approach, and mother was notably absent from assessments with this family.

What does this mean for your professional practice?

- When undertaking an assessment of a child; you should involve all parents, carers and family members to enable a holistic view of risk, need and vulnerability.
- Information that is self- disclosed by families should be analysed through a combination of triangulation with other agencies and professional observation.
- You should be professionally curious when completing assessments and intervention with families; appropriately exploring and challenging information to ensure that circumstances are well understood. Reflective supervision or similar methods should be used to explore possible hypotheses when working with families.
- Where multiple agencies are working together with a family, there should be regular communication via the professional group, with clear plans in place and an identified lead professional.
- Data Protection should not be a barrier to effective information sharing. You need to be aware of your requirement to share information in line with General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR). The guidance documents can be accessed here-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation>

Theme 2 – Safeguarding Children at Risk

In December 2016 there was a child protection concern in respect of Child P’s family due to an allegation of physical harm. The referral and investigation were not completed in line with either the Wolverhampton protocol or existing statutory guidance.

What does this mean for your professional practice?

- Safeguarding is everybody’s responsibility. Responding to safeguarding concerns without following due process can lead to poor quality assessments and interventions, missed opportunities and increased risk. Therefore, you need to be aware of your responsibilities in line with both your local policy guidance and the national guidance; which must be followed at all times. The guidance documents can be accessed here-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

<https://www.wolverhamptonsafeguarding.org.uk/safeguarding-children-and-young-people/i-work-with-children-young-people-families/safeguarding-children-board-policies-and-procedures>

Theme 3 – Neglect

Issues around potential neglect within Child P's family were not well explored or understood. This may have contributed to missed opportunities to support the family and more effectively assess the level of risk and vulnerability.

What does this mean for your professional practice?

- You should carefully consider the impact of potential neglect within assessments of families, and particularly the impact that this is having on the lives of children.
- You should regularly complete and update impact chronologies, or other similar methods/tools to track and review neglect within families. This will allow you to more effectively consider the extent of neglect over time and the steps required to support this.
- As neglect is a complex form of abuse, you should use the neglect strategy and Wecan tool. Guidance for practitioners is available at: <https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/wecan> that has a focus on adolescents and considers the impact on their development and associated behaviours.

Theme 4 – Culture and language

This family's language and cultural needs were not well explored or understood by professionals. Professional interpreters were not used, and written documents were not translated. Family members were often used as interpreters. Issues were too readily accepted as cultural normalities without exploration.

What does this mean for your professional practice?

- Working without an interpreter with families for whom English is not their first language can lead to miscommunication and inaccurate assessment. You should always use a professional interpreter and avoid using family members wherever possible.
- You need to consider whether families are able to read in English and understand the information and plans that you are putting into place. Translation services should be utilised where required.
- You need to remain professionally curious regarding any issues that may be described as cultural norms; and be confident to challenge this where required. Abusive or neglectful behaviours need to be challenged, risk assessed and incorporated into plans.