

Learning Lessons from Serious Case Reviews

The LSCB in 2010 established a “Learning Task Group” to ascertain additional local multi-agency learning from Individual Management Reviews (IMR’s) provided by Solihull agencies to a Serious Case Review undertaken by another LSCB area.

Following completion and reporting of this to the LSCB in March 2010 a second phase was undertaken which was reported to the LSCB in March 2011.

Key multi-agency lessons from the Learning Task Group are:-

- Children and young people should be the focus of any work to support and assess their needs
- Any assessment should explore current information within the context of information already known by agencies and with professional curiosity and inquisitiveness. The assessment should be holistic in approach
- The importance of measuring and securing ‘real’ parental engagement and in particular practitioners being able to identify and respond to “disguised compliance”
- Any assessment should not be closed down on the basis of parental non-engagement; if the decision is made to close the assessment, explicit consideration must be given to how the original presenting concerns are to be addressed and this consideration should be recorded
- The need to understand family networks and an adult’s contact with children and young people; genograms provide a tool to assist workers understand family make up, dynamics and contact with children and young people
- The need to share information in respect of individuals known to pose a risk to children and young people.
- The need to focus on the cumulative impact of neglect

Key multi-agency learning from the 2nd Learning Task Group are:

- Practitioners and managers should be mindful to avoid drift in assessing and providing services to a child/young person and their family to support improved outcomes

- Practitioners, must be supported to challenge and hold other multi agency colleagues to account when a child/young person's needs are not being met and/or there is undue delay to meet needs and provide services
- Older children should not be viewed as having lesser needs, including risk of harm, than younger children.
- All assessment of children and young people's needs should be holistic in approach
- Practitioners should be mindful of the young person as a key source of safeguarding information
- Practitioners, and their managers, should be to be mindful to develop and seek to build, with young people worked, a trusting and consistent relationship with limited, or preferably no changes of personnel
- Consistent, coherent, and co-ordinated multi-disciplinary planning and review to meet the needs of children and their families is required including clear ownership of the plan and effective oversight, and management by the Lead Professional.

Other learning from the SCR not detailed above are:

- Assessments of children's needs must take into account the impact of parental substance misuse and/or mental health issues on parenting capacity
- Accurate, accessible, and comprehensive case recording is a key tool in assessment and provision of service, including the use of chronologies and genograms
- Information-sharing between agencies and decision making needs to be considered in the absolute centrality of safeguarding children
- Supervision of staff in all agencies needs to be clearly defined
- Assessments and service delivery should proactively take into account equality and diversity issues

In addition to this the Report *"Learning from Biennial Analysis of Serious Case Reviews. Notifications 2007-09"* Brandon et al (DfE 2010) highlights, some practice reminders from the aggregate learning of Serious Case Reviews (SCR's) in England and Wales between 2007 and 2009. to support the safeguarding of children and young people These are in brief:

- Building strong relationships with children and families is critical to the helping process
- Understanding patterns of co-operation, including hostility, non-compliance, and deception by families is critical to safeguarding children and young people
- Professional challenge with a practice mindset of rigorous, systematic, thinking and analysis is necessary
- Being drawn into “Start-again” syndrome practice is a pitfall to be avoided
- Being overwhelmed by the complexity of need or having low expectations of families needs to be avoided
- Avoid inappropriately “thinking the best” of families, usually to avoid difficult and challenging decisions
- Flexible thinking, and avoiding fixed views and rigid thinking about situations is integral to effective safeguarding
- Be mindful of children, who through various circumstances, are missing or invisible to practitioners even when involved with a family –ask yourself What do I know about each child and have I seen each child.?

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