



North East Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership

Practice Briefing 29

Background and concerns

This practice briefing is in respect of a sibling group where there was a long history of involvement at both child in need and child protection levels. A range of factors including domestic abuse, substance misuse, parental mental health, frequent house moves, not being taken to health appointments and poor school attendance were evident. The children experienced neglect and intra-familial sexual abuse over several years.

Purpose of the review

Following a serious child safeguarding incident notification in 2020 to the then Safeguarding Partners it was agreed that the children had experienced serious harm, and a Rapid Review was undertaken. The outcome was to undertake a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) in order to identify improvements in practice. The National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel agreed with this outcome. This practice briefing represents the publication of the LCSPR and has been placed on the partnership Safer NEL website.

Key lines of enquiry

The review focused on the following key areas:

- How the voice of the child informed assessments
- Use and effectiveness of the Safeguarding Children's Partnership Professional Resolution and Escalation Procedure
- Effectiveness of agencies response to intra-familial child sexual abuse, physical harm and domestic abuse
- Effectiveness of strategy discussions
- Agencies response to child neglect and emotional harm
- Multi-agency assessment including risk assessment

Learning

Learning from the review is identified below and has informed local reflective practice, critical thinking, collaborate learning and improvements across the local safeguarding system:

- The need for the police and social workers to have the right knowledge and skills to respond confidently to intra-familial child sexual abuse
- The importance of the police sharing information with children's services and consideration of a strategy discussion where there are adult historical disclosures of child sexual abuse related to a person in contact with children
- Importance of all practitioners incorporating direct work with children into the enquiry and assessment process and consideration of what the child's presenting

- behaviour might signify alongside the indicators of abuse
- For professionals to understand and be confident in the use of the Safeguarding Children Partnership (SCP) Professional Resolution and Escalation Procedure to effectively raise and seek resolution of identified issues and areas of disagreement
- Effectiveness of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, now Integrated Front Door (IFD), in identifying concerns, evaluation of the sources of information and the nature of risk, planning and agreeing the response
- The need to develop the use of safeguarding meetings in primary health care, centred in GP practices, that draw on the wider health care team in fully understanding the child's history and in identifying presenting vulnerability
- It is crucial for practitioners to understand and assess neglect in the context of the relationship with the care giver and the impact of neglect on the child's health and development
- Multiple risk factors, including domestic abuse and the risk of emotional and physical harm should be assessed in the context of the family history, repeated incidences of abuse and neglect over time, with consideration of accumulative risk
- Where agencies have organisational capacity issues that may impact on service provision, that there is a robust process whereby this is reported to the SCP and safeguards should be put in place to reduce the potential impact
- The use of chronologies and multi-agency assessments are integral to understanding patterns of concern and in ensuring that all relevant agency information is available for and considered in strategy discussions where there is the identification of actual or likely significant harm of children

Implementation of the review recommendations

The recommendations from the review are based on the key learning points from the review as outlined above. The table below details the ten recommendations / actions and their implementation.

1. Agencies to review how disclosures of non-recent child sexual abuse are recorded
<p>The SCP Board identified child sexual abuse as a priority in December 2022. A Child Sexual Abuse Strategic Group was established at that time, and a Child Sexual Abuse Strategy developed and published in April 2024. Child Sexual Abuse Practice Guidance was developed, published on the partnership website, and disseminated across partner agencies making explicit how agencies should respond to concerns in respect of child sexual abuse including non-recent allegations of child sexual abuse.</p> <p>Facilitated through the Yorkshire and Humber Multi Agency Safeguarding Trainers Forum, the Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse delivered an introduction on intra familial child sexual abuse to 137 practitioners from across the North East Lincolnshire (NEL) SCP in July 2023.</p> <p>More recently, child sexual abuse training sessions have been delivered by a local trainer to 128 social care staff in October and November 2024 with further planned. This training will be delivered to partner agencies during January and February 2025 as part of the SCP training and education programme. Following this, an introduction to intra familial child sexual abuse course from the Centre of expertise will be delivered to social workers and to partner agencies in March and April 2025.</p> <p>Local trainers across the partnership are being identified to undertake the intra-familial child sexual abuse train the trainer course by the Centre of expertise in May 2025.</p>

This will equip them with the knowledge, associated training materials and resources and enable them to deliver further specific training across the local multi-agency arrangements and embed child sexual abuse knowledge across the partnership workforce. The train the trainer methodology will enable a local sustainable programme of child abuse training.

A Child Sexual Abuse Toolkit has been developed and supports the above training. It is available to practitioners and managers on the partnership Safer NEL website.

2. Police and Children's Services to review action needed to ensure appropriate training and support when undertaking investigations involving child sexual abuse

There were eight Achieving Best Evidence courses held in 2022, five in 2023 and five in 2024 which a high number of police officers and social workers from NEL have completed. This training teaches practitioners how to interview children in the context of a criminal investigation.

All police officers have received vulnerability training in relation to identifying sexual offending. Police officers working in the police Protecting Vulnerable People unit receive enhanced training on dealing with sexual offence investigations.

Social workers receive a package of education to support them in their assessment of child sexual abuse including, the local threshold document, risk analysis framework and child sexual abuse training.

3. Director of Children's Services to identify action to improve the quality and consistency of direct work with children when undertaking enquiries, assessments and plans

Since the end of 2023, when a new Director of Children's Services started, there has been the recruitment of a full senior leadership and management team across children's social care within Children's Services. This has improved the quality and consistency of practice, including direct work with children and families.

A three-day Foundations for Practice Induction Programme has been developed and implemented from September 2023 and is held monthly for new and existing social care case holding practitioners. This includes training on chronologies, assessments, risk analysis framework, direct work with children, multi-agency working etc.

There has been an amplified focus on the quality of meaningful intervention with children and families which has included training, learning and development work across the workforce. A Direct Work and Practice Toolkit has been developed to support Children's Services practitioners in their direct work with children.

A monthly Children's Experience and Audit Meeting has been in place since February 2023, underpinned by a monthly audit process across children's social care. A key focus is on evidence of and the impact of direct work with children. Feedback is provided to the children's social care workforce on the strengths and areas for development across targeted early help and safeguarding practice.

<p>4. The Integrated Care Board to consider what further advice and support primary health care services need in their working practice of identifying and collating information about child safeguarding concerns and child vulnerability</p> <p>Specialist Primary Care Nurses have been introduced which supports GP practices in fulfilling their safeguarding responsibilities and in their engagement within the Integrated Care Board (ICB). There has been improved primary care engagement with the safeguarding agenda through quarterly joint meetings with GPs and the ICB safeguarding team.</p> <p>Safeguarding Lead Nurses for Primary Care contribute to statutory safeguarding processes through acting as a conduit for advice, information sharing with partnership agencies and through the provision of information for child protection conferences. This has enhanced the quality of safeguarding practice in primary care.</p>
<p>5. The safeguarding partners to ensure routine reporting on organisational capacity</p> <p>The learning from the practice review was disseminated across all partner agencies in July 2021, including the need for all agencies to raise operational issues that potentially impact on service delivery with the SCP Board. Agency leads were responsible for reporting capacity issues into the SCP Strategic Management Group that reported to the SCP Board which was in place until February 2024.</p> <p>Following this point any issues relating to operational capacity and the impact on service provision are routinely reported into the quarterly Safeguarding Performance Practice and Assurance Group that reports into the SCP Board. This has enabled the SCP Board to be sighted of any capacity issues across the partnership and to put measures in place to reduce the potential impact. All key safeguarding leads across the partnership are clear on their responsibility to raise capacity issues with the SCP and to assess the impact on service delivery and practice.</p>
<p>6. The safeguarding partners should commission a multi-agency task and finish group to evaluate arrangements for escalating concerns about the welfare or safety of a child</p> <p>A task and finish group was established in June 2022 which reviewed and revised the SCP Professional Resolution and Escalation Procedure which was published in August 2022 on the partnership website. The procedure was further reviewed and re published in February 2023, followed by multi agency training sessions that were delivered across the partnership on the use of the procedure in resolving professional disagreements in respect of safeguarding children in a timely manner. The SCP Professional Resolution and Escalation Procedure has been widely disseminated across the partnership to raise awareness and understanding of the process and their responsibilities.</p> <p>The effectiveness of the procedure is a key area of focus within audits undertaken as part of the SCP Scrutiny and Assurance Framework. During a thematic practice learning event on multi-agency working with children subject of protection plans in July 2024, the Independent Scrutiny Officers found evidence of collaborative multi-agency relationships and positive challenge alongside the use of formal escalation in a few cases.</p>

7. The safeguarding partners to consider what further work is required to promote the use of frameworks to assist professional judgment in identifying and responding to neglect

The SCP Board identified neglect as a priority in December 2022. A Neglect Group was established and the Neglect Strategy and guidance were revised and republished on the SCP website in December 2023. The Neglect Strategy was launched at a partnership event in July 2024 alongside the Child Sexual Abuse Strategy and the new Helping Supporting and Protecting Children and Families in North East Lincolnshire Threshold Document.

The SCP have worked with a national expert Jane Wiffin who undertook a review of the findings from local reviews in respect of neglect in March 2023. The recommendations have informed the development of the local arrangements to respond to neglect. This included the development of and roll out of a neglect screening tool across the partnership which supports early identification of the factors of neglect.

In addition, neglect training has been developed and delivered by Jane Wiffin informed by the thematic neglect review. There has been almost 400 practitioners from across partner agencies who have attended the training since April 2024 with further sessions planned. The feedback is that it has greatly increased practitioners' knowledge and understanding of neglect and the impact on children's needs and that it will further strengthen agencies assessment of neglect.

8. The safeguarding partners should ensure that lessons from the review are taken into account in the review of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub working arrangements and if necessary, consider action to improve the consistency and quality of strategy discussions, the use of strategy discussions and improving the planning of complex abuse enquiries and investigations

The IFD was established in 2022 and replaced the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. The development of the IFD was fully informed by the learning from this review. Partner agencies are integrated into the IFD which ensures timely and holistic information gathering and sharing and decision making for children.

During 2022 the strategy discussion guidance was revised and a package of training was delivered across the partnership to improve the consistency and quality of strategy discussions and enquiry/investigation planning for children who are suffering or likely to be suffering significant harm. The training reinforced the importance of the use of chronologies and inter agency assessments.

Ten strategy discussion training courses have been delivered since 2022 with over 143 practitioners across agencies attending. The guidance and training has strengthened agencies understanding of the process and of their role and responsibility within it.

The quality assurance framework in relation to strategy discussions has been strengthened as part of the Children's Services monthly audit process and the SCP Scrutiny and Assurance Framework.

<p>9. To consider what further action is required to further strengthen the child sexual abuse medical pathway</p> <p>The SCP updated the 'Multi-agency pathway for suspected child sexual abuse' in conjunction with the Child Sexual Assault Assessment Service, Anlaby Suite at Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust in November 2022. This was published on the partnership website.</p> <p>The pathway has been embedded through partnership training on strategy discussions and through the Children's Services monthly audit process and the SCP Scrutiny and Assurance Framework as outlined above.</p>
<p>10. A copy of the practice review report and learning briefing to be shared with the Community Safety Partnership</p> <p>The LCSPR report was shared with the Community Safety Partnership upon completion in January 2021.</p> <p>The work undertaken across the SCP in response to the review recommendations, including the development of the neglect and child sexual abuse strategies and training has been disseminated across all partnerships through the Safer NEL website.</p> <p>The learning from this review was shared at an SCP partnership event in December 2024 alongside a keynote speaker from the Centre of expertise which has raised the understanding of and profile of intra-familial child sexual abuse across agencies and organisations including schools and the voluntary charity and social enterprise sector, ahead of further partnership training.</p>

Links to the key strategies, documents and guidance referred to within the Practice Briefing

Helping, Supporting and Protecting Children and Families in North East Lincolnshire Threshold Document <https://safernel.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/NEL-Threshold-Documents-2024-28-FINAL-refresh-July-2024.pdf>

Child Sexual Abuse Practice Guidance [Child Sexual Abuse](#)

Multi Agency Pathway for Suspected Child Abuse Flowchart. <https://safernel.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Multi-agency-Pathway-for-suspected-child-sexual-abuse-flowchart-May-2024.pdf>

Child Sexual Abuse Strategy. <https://safernel.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Child-Sexual-Abuse-Strategy-2024-1.pdf>

Child Sexual Abuse Practice Briefing. <https://safernel.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/CSA-Briefing.pdf>

Child Sexual Abuse Toolkit <https://safernel.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/NEL-CSA-Toolkit-Final-Nov-2024.docx>

Professional Resolution and Escalation procedure <https://nelincsscp.trixonline.co.uk/chapter/professional-resolution-and-escalation-procedure?search=escalation>

Neglect Strategy 2023-2026. <https://safernel.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Neglect-Strategy-16.01.24.pdf>

Neglect Briefing. <https://safernel.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/SCP-Briefing-Neglect.pdf>

Neglect Screening Tool. <https://safernel.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/NEL-Neglect-Screening-Tool-1.docx>

NEL SCP Children's Education and Training Programme [SaferNEL | Children's Workforce Development - SaferNEL](#)