

West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership

SCR W Executive Summary Response

Response to SCR W Executive Summary

Serious Case Review (SCR) W was commissioned to review the experiences of a sibling group of two children under the age of 10, who experienced significant neglect of their physical, emotional and social developmental needs. This included neglect of one child's health needs and failure to ensure necessary medical care. The SCR analysed what the children told professionals, their lived experiences and the care provided by their parents and carers, as a method of understanding the neglect they suffered. The views of the family were included within the report, as it is essential that reviews hear directly from families about the experiences they received.

The SCR also reflected on the multi-agency professional network surrounding the family, to understand the focus and context of the work being provided to these children and their family. This supports the learning review process for practice improvements as a multi-agency safeguarding system within West Sussex.

The review identified a number of areas of good practice, namely: timely cognitive assessment of the parents which resulted in an agreed PAM's assessment; positive multi-agency partnership working about how to effectively communicate with one of the siblings; advocacy support for the parents, via an adult social worker; the direct work carried out by the school nurse, which allowed the child's voice to be heard and shared within the multi-agency group.

The review also identified a number of risk factors that impacted upon the parenting of the children. These included the use of alcohol and aggressive challenging behaviour. In particular it considered why these risk factors and their impact on the children were not effectively addressed by the multi-agency network to ensure the timely protection of the children. Overall, the consistent sharing of information, risk analysis and safety planning within the multi-agency network were highlighted as key areas of learning in this review.

The review also reflected on the barriers to effective multi-agency safeguarding practice. It was recognised that intimidating behaviour by adults in the family and a lack of professional challenge to the family were key factors that often meant that the assessments were more adult focused than child centred. The family history was not well understood by professionals working with the children and as a result, the lived experience of

the children and effectiveness of past interventions was not used to inform the actions of agencies.

West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership fully accepts the findings and learning arising from this Serious Case Review and will ensure that the following learning is addressed to ensure that:

Multi-agency partners can evidence a shared responsibility for the safeguarding and protection of children.

Multi-agency professionals are skilled and confident in carrying out child centred multi-agency assessments and safety planning to ensure children's safety and the best outcomes for them.

Multi-agency assessments, risk assessments and effective safety plans are secured and monitored within the child protection conference process, to ensure the best outcomes for children.

The use of the West Sussex Safeguarding Partnership Escalation policy and procedure is used effectively to address and resolve professional disagreements and add to the learning of the Partnership.

As part of the response to this review, the partnership was determined to drive through work needed to ensure that professionals were able to recognise and respond to neglect and offer timely and purposeful interventions and services. A partnership Neglect Working Group was established in late spring 2019, to ensure that practice is improved across all agencies. The work to date has included hearing directly from children, young people and their families about their experiences of services and how these can be improved. It has also involved hearing from a range of professionals to capture their views on barriers to effective interventions and ideas about how to improve responses to neglect.

This working group focussed on developing the partnership Neglect Strategy, which sets out the clear expectations of how social workers and other professionals should work with children to understand the child's lived experience. Various tools have been developed to support professionals to improve their practice in recognising and responding to neglect and many of these are compulsory. For example, the 'day in the life' tool is used to elicit detailed information about what day to day life is like for children and young people. This assists professionals to assess what action they need to take to ensure these children and their families are appropriately supported and any risks identified and acted upon.

Each agency is required to develop an action plan about how it will improve its recognition of and response to neglect and progress is regularly scrutinised by the Safeguarding Children Partnership, using an agreed Impact

Framework. Additionally, progress on this work is reported to the West Sussex Improvement Board, a statutory Board chaired by the Commissioner appointed directly by the Secretary of State. This Improvement Board oversees the improvements in Children's Services as a result of the 2019 Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services.

The full roll-out of the Neglect Strategy and toolkits commenced in February 2020 for more than 800 practitioners. The Strategy and tools have also been placed on the West Sussex Safeguarding Children webpage for all professionals to access¹.

¹ <https://www.westsussexscp.org.uk>