

Wigan Safeguarding Partnership 7 Minute Briefing – Child 1&2

Background

Child 1 was exposed to suspected criminal activity and domestic violence perpetrated by his father and his mother's subsequent partners. Child 2 experienced a lack of effective parenting and, over time, was increasingly out of his home, seeking food and shelter where he could. Both boys had suffered neglect at home and were known to Children's Social Care from an early age. In both cases parents had been resistant to efforts to bring about improvements in their parenting. Neither child's mother had prioritised their needs and, for years, both boys had spent a great deal of time, both day and night, out of their homes and involved with anti-social and criminal behaviour; often while part of a larger group of young people in the area. Neither child attended school regularly.

Child 2 tragically died and Child 1 was seriously injured during an incident in 2019.

What was the Learning?

- When a child is exposed to domestic violence it should be recognised by practitioners that this constitutes emotional abuse and neglect.
- Professionals need to be clear and persistent with parents about their concerns, their offer of help and the potential impact on their children if parents fail to engage.
- Multiple professionals working with the same family should be minimised wherever possible.
- Holistic assessments will draw out the impact of neglect on children over time.
- Where parents do not engage in meaningful long-term change, Child protection processes are necessary, in order to avoid a child suffering significant harm through neglect.
- There is a need for practitioners to recognise that lack of school attendance can be indicative of a safeguarding issue.
- Where a Graded Care Profile is completed and significant concerns are identified by agencies, Children's Social Care should always provide a response.
- Where ongoing significant harm due to neglect is suspected, the holding of a strategy meeting is appropriate.
- High quality communication between services and schools is crucial. Changes necessitated by the pandemic, allowing easier attendance at meetings, should be capitalized upon as they present opportunities for more efficient working. Clearer supportive links with Children's Social Care might further enhance what schools are able to achieve.
- Professionals should always ask 'What is the impact of our actions on the child's outcomes?' If a plan is not working over time, it needs to be changed.
- Any solution or amelioration of the problem of criminality linked to familial neglect needs to be part of a multi-agency strategy including Police and Children's Social Care.

Why is this important to Wigan?

The Deal for Children and Young People promotes the recognition of unique strengths and values of young people and centres around doing what is best for them. The Deal allows practitioners to work differently, promotes effective interventions and outcomes for children and young people. The Deal promotes integrated working with partners, promoting interventions which wrap around the needs of the child.

What can we consider?

- Are there any gaps in your knowledge around domestic violence and the links to emotional abuse and neglect?
- Do you feel able to speak openly and honestly with families about your concerns, demonstrate respectful uncertainty and explain your reasoning?
- Do you consider the history of the family and whether there is evidence to support sustainable positive change? Where change is evident is there a certain level of support required to achieve this?
- Are you able to have conversations which enhance assessments?
- How well do you explore a lack of school attendance within your assessments?
- What are the plans within your service to continue to utilise the changes made during the pandemic? For example, continuing to use Microsoft Teams for some meetings.
- During assessments do you consider what the expected outcomes are and if these are still achievable? What are the barriers to achieving these? Is the current plan able to address these?

Want to learn more?

Information about domestic abuse impact on children:

https://greatermanchesterscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_dom_abu.html?zoom_highlight=domestic+abuse

Information about criminal exploitation

Information about The Deal for Children and Young People

Information about professional curiosity and challenge

Information about Working Together to Safeguard Children