

Wigan Safeguarding Children's Partnership 7 Minute Briefing – Child L

Background

Child L first came to the attention of Children Social Care (CSC) in early 2017 when their mother was admitted to hospital and it was believed that she would not survive. A home visit was undertaken by CSC and Child L was found to be unkempt with limited suitable clothing. Home conditions were poor with no items that would support Child L's development. Child L was socially isolated having experienced a reclusive existence. Child L had been electively home educated from the age of 6 and seen once by the Local Authority in 2009. Both Child L's mother and her partner experienced mental ill health.

What was the Learning?

- Child L became invisible or lost, not because agencies did not fulfil their role and responsibilities but because the law on elected home education allowed Child L's mother to keep him out of sight.
- The law relating to elected home education frustrates rather than facilitates local authorities and their partner agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The current law placed limitations of what local authorities may lawfully do in order to ensure that all children receive a suitable education.
- Professionals need to "think family" and be more professionally curious when considering how mental health issues may impact on a person's ability to parent.
- The law does not currently support agencies to ascertain the wishes and feelings of children / young people around their own home education at annual reviews.
- There are no clear expectations of what home education should look like in order to assess it annually. There are also no requirements for parents to inform the Local Authority that they are home educating.
- School nursing services are reliant on parent's engagement with them for children who are home educated without the school setting as a means of contact.
- Information sharing processes are weakened where children are not present in a school setting for their education. Standard procedures do not consider the impact of this on services' ability to engage families.
- There are no established processes or legal requirements to ascertain the suitability and capacity of parents to home educate their children.
- Routine enquiry about dependent children in NHS secondary care providers needs to be more robust.

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?

- What knowledge does your service have in relation to the laws and best practice around children who are home educated?
- Does your service have flexibility in their approach to managing cases where a child is not in a mainstream education setting?
- What approaches would you take to encourage engagement if initial means of contact have been unsuccessful?
- How consistent is routine enquiry within your service regarding dependent children, family members and significant adults?
- How does your service gather information from other partner agencies on their involvement with an individual or family?
- Do you give due consideration within your service to recognising disguised compliance and would you have the confidence to challenge this?
- What is your services offer of support to families considering or actively Elective Home Educating their children?

Want to learn more?

Greater Manchester Procedures: [Children of Parents with Mental Health Difficulties](#)

Information about: [EHE guidance for Local Authority professionals](#)

Information about [Learning from Serious Case Reviews - Disguised Compliance](#)

Further information on policies / procedures can be found on [Wigan Safeguarding Board](#) website