

Wigan Safeguarding Partnership 7 Minute Briefing- Child O

Background

Child O had lived with various family members since being 8 years old following a difficult relationship with their mother. This also included having a 16-month period of being looked after and placed with foster carers. An incident occurred when Child O was 10 years old and they were found by police in the early hours in a darkened flat, in bed with another young person who was known to be at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). Two males, both above the age of 18 were also present. A referral to Children's Social Care (CSC) and a child and family assessment was undertaken amidst concerns that Child O was 'at risk' of CSE.

Support was provided by the CSE Team and Child O was assessed as being at 'medium' risk of CSE. The CSE team continued their involvement with the family and Child O for a number of months. Several months after the original referral to CSC, Child O was made subject to Child in Need Plan following continued concerns about CSE risks and an allegation made by Child O of sexual assault by a young person.

Just before turning 12, Child O was made subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) under the category of Neglect. Throughout this period Child O continued to be assessed at 'medium' risk of CSE. There were multiple missing from home episodes and these episodes lengthened in frequency and intensity. Child O was excluded from school and their mental health began to deteriorate. In Summer 2017, Child O was placed in a specialist therapeutic unit where they began to disclose information about the numerous sexual assaults they had been subjected to during the previous two years.

In 2017 Wigan Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) held a Critical Incident Meeting (CIM) in respect of Child O. The CIM concluded that the criteria was met for a Serious Case Review (SCR) due to what happened to Child O, both before and after being made subject of CIN plan and CPP. This SCR considered whether professionals had worked together as well as they might have done to keep Child O safe.

What was the Learning?

- The electronic records system used by Children's Social Care does not support the development of focused and effective Child Protection Plans and Action Plans.
- Robust managerial oversight is crucial to ensure that action plans are regularly reviewed, effectiveness of interventions is clear and that our work with children, young people and their families does not drift.
- Some Professionals' knowledge was lacking in relation to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the implications for their working practice.
- Services who work with adolescents need to understand contextual safeguarding (also known as 'Risk from Outside the Home'). Professionals should be supported to consider contextual safeguarding risks in their assessments and in their planning for children and young people.
- The CSE risk assessment should be reviewed to ensure risks in children under the age of 13 are better recognised and the use of RAG rating / scoring contributes to a wider assessment of the child's circumstances.

- Risk assessment tools are best used to raise awareness and support decision-making rather than being used as a definitive confirmation of exploitation or risk as this has the potential to leave some child victims of CSE without protective measures.
- The reliability of practitioners' judgments concerning the assessment of CSE risk and harm could be significantly improved if information is collected and analysed using multi-agency chronologies. This would enable the 'tipping' point at which statutory intervention is necessary to be more easily defined.
- Systems need to be improved to ensure multi-agency meetings are more effective and support rather than inhibit partnership working.

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?

- Do you have up to date knowledge about Adverse Childhood Experiences? Is there any training you can attend to enhance your knowledge?
- How do you ensure you keep an open mind in practice?
- How do you demonstrate the child's lived experience and hearing/listening to the child's voice in your assessments?
- Who else might hold vital information which could add to the assessments we conduct?
- How do you critically analyse the information available to you and maintain professional curiosity within your role?
- How do you evidence the impact of your interventions?
- Do you regularly review assessments to ensure the service being delivered meets the child's needs?

Want to learn more?

Greater Manchester Safeguarding Procedures – [Sexual Exploitation](#)

Information about Project Phoenix: [Its not okay](#)

Information about [professional curiosity and challenge, having difficult conversation](#)

Information about [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)

Information about [Indicators of Neglect](#)