

# 7 Minute Briefing – WG N63 2021

Scope of review is 01.10.18 – 30.11.20

## 7) Learning Opportunities Recommendations Continued

4) Local authority need to have a system to fully consider the complexity of the family circumstance which could include extra-familial harm when allocating case worker.

5) Advocacy should be offered to children involved in child neglect cases regardless of age and their developmental stage using a trauma informed approach. Practitioners need to have awareness of all approaches to advocacy.

## 6) Learning Opportunities Recommendations

1) Local Authorities to have clear policy/practice guidance to ensure safe and timely sharing of information when children are not on the child protection register, and escalation processes if this is not been complied with, this includes cross border

2) Paediatric Review should be standard practice for all child protection neglect cases which do not show significant progress when they reach second review conference stage.

3) All practitioners who are involved in child protection processes should have access to training on disguised compliance. This will enable a robust assessment of parental engagement, with clear identification of positive progress and improved outcomes for children.

## 5) Voice of the Child & advocacy

There was limited evidence that the children were asked about their wishes and feelings. It is recommended that practitioners seek to understand the lived experience of the child and best practice recommends seeing children on their own in a safe environment where they can speak freely. As all children were on the Child Protection Register, they were entitled to advocacy from an independent professional advocate, but it was noted that some were deemed too young to qualify. The reviewers suggest considering different forms of non-instructed advocacy, such as the rights-based approach, person-centred approach, watching brief approach, and witness-observer approach. It is also recommended to use a trauma-informed approach when considering an appropriate advocate.

## 1) Background

A referral was initially received by the PRMG to consider commissioning a review following police powers being exercised due to neglect and the removal of 5 of the 6 children who were on the child protection register for 18 months prior to this. The six siblings were previously on the Child Protection Register in Local Authority 1 but were deregistered prior to moving. In June 2018, the family, including Mother, Father 2, and all six children, moved to Local Authority 2 area. The move was encouraged by Local Authority 1 children's services to protect Child A, who had substance misuse and was at risk of violence. The children had health and well-being concerns, including dental caries, head lice, and lack of appropriate clothing. The children lacked opportunities to socialize and learn due to limited school attendance and no access to appropriate toys or other forms of stimulation. The family was exposed to significant harm, including parental substance misuse, domestic abuse, chronic neglect of health needs, limited access to food and appropriate clean clothing, and lack of a stable home environment. Challenges included poor oral hygiene, fluctuating home conditions, inconsistent school attendance, and limited engagement with support services. The Covid-19 pandemic added further complications, as some routines and appointments became less accessible.

## 2) Key learning Themes Cross Border Working

The challenges highlighted the importance of information sharing and collaboration between authorities to ensure the safety and protection of children. When children are moving between areas and there are disputes over case responsibility, appropriate safeguards should be in place and agencies must work together to manage risks effectively. Historical information and previous risk factors should be shared by the originating authority to ensure that receiving authorities are fully informed during assessments.

## 3) Neglect of Neglect

Parental needs were significant and it was recognised that practitioners involved with families tend to focus on supporting parents to address their needs, such as substance abuse or mental health issues, rather than the impact of this on their children. The chronic nature of neglect can make it harder for practitioners to recognize and take immediate action. False optimism and disguised compliance can also be present in cases of neglect, masking the lack of progress in addressing the needs of neglected children. Practitioners should utilize methods such as Motivational Interviewing to gauge parental motivation to change and set achievable targets. However, the review did not see evidence of this approach being implemented in the case discussion



## 4) Extra familial harm

There were challenges safeguarding Child A, who moved frequently between two different local authority areas and was involved in criminal activity and possible exploitation. These difficulties led to the child often being overlooked in care planning. It is recommended that each child's circumstances be considered fully when allocating social workers to ensure that the risks of extra familial harm are not absorbed within the wider family dynamic. Better supervision can also support allocation of multiple workers in cases of extra familial harm.