

Family M

This review focused on five children: Sibling 1 aged 4, Sibling 2 aged 6, Sibling 3 aged 8, Sibling 4 aged 10 and Sibling 5 aged 12 (all ages at the start of the review period). They were living with their Mother and her partner Mr W, father of 2 of the children. Historically there had been concerns in relation to neglect, emotional abuse and domestic abuse going back several years.

Mr W was found to have downloaded child sexual abuse images. He was arrested and released on bail conditions not to have unsupervised contact with any child. An initial child protection conference for the children was planned but then cancelled and the case was held at child in need.

During this process, there continued to be concerns in relation to neglect, emotional and physical abuse; however, there was professional disagreement about and lack of clear analysis of these risks. There were also concerns that bail conditions were not being adhered to by Mr W. Forensic examination of the sexual abuse images evidenced that one of the children had been subject to sexual abuse by Mr W. He was convicted of a number of child sex offences and is now in jail.

The full report can be read here www.wiltshirescb.org.uk/professionals/serious-case-reviews/

The Findings

WSCB has reflected on the findings of this Serious Case Review and will use its role to ensure these findings are shared throughout all organisations working with children and young people in Wiltshire. Findings will feed into single and multi-agency training and relevant forums.

The 'findings' of a systems case review are insights rather than recommendations for set action. They highlight underlying patterns of influence on performance. In contrast to the previous SCR approach, there is no assumption that the implications for the action required to achieve improvements is either known or knowable in any absolute sense. It may therefore be more appropriate for LSCBs to focus on how they respond to these insights, rather than on the specifics of how they implement a particular action plan.

By following the principles set out within Working Together 2015 this response plan will:

- Recognise the complex circumstances in which professionals work together to safeguard children
- Support a culture of continuous learning and improvement across the organisations, identifying opportunities to draw on what works and promote good practice
- Be proportionate to the complexity of the issues being examined

- Keep professionals fully involved in further communications and learning

However, the WSCB Serious Case Review Sub-Group will have a role in holding organisations to account in their response to the learning and an update report will be reported to the WSCB Executive.

What WSCB has already done

Partner organisations represented on WSCB have not waited for the publication of the Serious Case Review before initiating action. Together we have:

- established a Task and Finish Group to develop and implement a neglect framework and toolkit for practitioners
- initiated a Child in Need Thematic Review, led by Mark Gurrey, WSCB Chair
- presented the findings to the WSCB Executive Board

Set out below is further response to the findings of the review.

Finding 1: The exponential increase in the number of men who view online child sexual abuse images is not matched by the development of knowledge of best professional practice, leaving professionals uncertain how to respond and children at continued risk of harm.

How will we know we are making a difference?	What are we going to do?	Who will lead	By when
Practitioners will have increased their understanding of online abuse and grooming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source best practice evidence and guidance for practitioners on online abuse • Explore opportunities for relevant training • Encourage wider discussion of risk of contact abuse by online offenders, informed by current research 	WSCB/Support and Safeguarding Service	ongoing

Finding 2: The absence of a clear framework for when interviews with children take place outside of the established Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) process, alongside the pressures to balance the requirements of evidence gathering with the need for child sensitive approaches, can lead to inconsistency and unclear interview approaches.

WSCB will seek assurance from Wiltshire Police and Children's Social Care, Wiltshire Council that current guidance for interviewing children includes good practice for interviews that take place outside of the ABE framework and that there are sufficient number of practitioners, across agencies, trained in appropriate interviewing techniques.

Finding 3: Appropriate routine professional challenge and the use of escalation processes is insufficiently embedded in the multi-agency network in Wiltshire; leaving differences in professional opinion unaddressed and causing feelings of “learned helplessness” which in turn makes resolution less likely. This undermines the safety and wellbeing of children and does not support action to address concerns

How will we know we are making a difference?	What are we going to do?	Who will lead	By when
<p>Professional challenge will be evidenced as part of our professional culture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the work we are already doing to raise awareness of the importance of professional challenge across the workforce • Implement a new approach to escalations as part of WSCB Quality Assurance Framework • Courageous Conversations workshops held as part of revised multi-agency learning opportunities • Use the S11 and S175 processes to determine how well professional challenge is embedded within organisations • Use the S11 process to determine whether appropriate supervision is in place • WSCB multi-agency audit tool includes a focus on use of escalation, enabling ongoing exploration of evidence of professional challenge and its impact as part of the broader audit process 	<p>WSCB Business Unit</p> <p>WSCB Chair</p> <p>WSCB Multi-Agency Training Development Officer</p> <p>WSCB QA Lead</p> <p>WSCB QA Lead</p> <p>WSCB QA Lead</p>	<p>ongoing</p>

Finding 4: There is a tendency for professionals to uncritically accept what parents tell them about their children in the mistaken belief that this is “working in partnership”, resulting in an inaccurate description of children’s needs and circumstances which are left unaddressed as a result.

How will we know we are making a difference?	What are we going to do?	Who will lead	By when
Healthy challenge will be evidenced as an integral part of our professional culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the work that we are already doing to raise awareness of the importance of healthy challenge across the children’s workforce • Reinforce through all safeguarding training what is meant by parental self-report and how this should be analysed by professionals • Evidence how well professional curiosity is embedded through audit programme • Explore what approaches agencies are taking in their work with families and working in partnership 	WSCB Business Unit	ongoing

Finding 5: The lack of an effective practice framework for working with neglect in Wiltshire has left professionals deskilled in their response and inconsistent in how they explicitly name child and adolescent “neglect”.

A Task and Finish Group has reviewed a range of existing neglect tools and guidance in order to assess the best fit for Wiltshire. This is a priority for WSCB and the launch is scheduled for summer 2018.

Finding 6: Although there have been changes to the way in which Child in Need processes are delivered in Wiltshire, there appears to be continued evidence that they lack a multi-agency approach and the rigour and focus seen in child protection processes is missing, with the result that there is insufficient analysis of children’s needs.

WSCB Chair is leading on a thematic Review of the Child in Need process in Wiltshire. This includes talking to practitioners, review of research and best practice elsewhere, learning from case reviews and the analysis of data, both local and national. Recommendations for improvement will be provided to WSCB Executive Board summer 2018.