



Intra-Familial Child Sexual Abuse in Derby

What you need to know

What we did

The Derby Safeguarding Children Board co-ordinated a multi-agency learning review to look at recent multi-agency practice where allegations had been made that a family member had sexually abused a child within the family.

To do this we held a series of learning events with frontline practitioners involved in six cases to identify practice that has been effective and opportunities to develop practice and improve safeguarding arrangements.

We wanted to understand how effectively current multi-agency practice protected children where concerns have been raised that sexual abuse may be occurring within a family.

What we found

- ❖ There did not appear to be particular patterns leading up to or causing the disclosure of the concerns around intra familial child sexual abuse.
- ❖ In general, practitioners involved in the review described feeling able to recognise early concerns and knowing who and where to take the information.
- ❖ School staff described different levels of informed support available to them within the sector and that they would welcome opportunities to reflect on cases to avoid feeling isolated and anxious about missing early indicators/signs of harm.
- ❖ There were examples of effective practice between agencies and a commitment to keeping children in families safe. Practitioners were able to describe different examples of good practice that were evident across the range of cases considered at the learning events. Some of these included:
 - Effective liaison between the Police and a Paediatrician. A particularly good example was liaison to clarify and agree wording of a medical report so that it most accurately reflected the medical opinion in a way that would be clearly understood within judicial processes.
 - Good information sharing with involving the Police, Children's Social Care, the School, Family Nurse Partnership and the Latvian Embassy (Project Advenus).
 - A good example of wrap around care from a school to support the young person who consistently confided in them about her changing home circumstances.



- Examples of good multi-agency working where effective liaison helped to improve the cooperation of family members and effective planning.
- In one case the use of Restorative Justice was noted as particularly effective for the child perpetrator, the victim child and the parent.
- ❖ The effective use of particular sections of the Safeguarding Children Procedures needed to be more consistent. Strategy *meetings* should be held in cases of alleged child sexual abuse (rather than discussions) to ensure involvement of relevant partner agencies and improve the planning of investigations.
- ❖ Ongoing support for the victims and alleged victims of intra-familial child sexual abuse requires effective planning. Management oversight and effective liaison between agencies should be the safety net to make sure ongoing plans are achieving this.
- ❖ There are opportunities to strengthen liaison between agencies and schools and the child or young person. Most schools will have cover during holidays and should be contacted if child protection enquiries are made during this period.
- ❖ Schools have ongoing opportunities to support the children throughout their career in the school so it is therefore important that the school and child are fully involved in the plans and risk management arrangements that are put in place.
- ❖ “Achieving Best Evidence” training was identified by Social Workers as essential in improving their knowledge and skills and had direct benefits in the support offered to the child or young person and the joint work with police.
- ❖ Practitioners identified how challenging it was in some cases to know what could be discussed with siblings and along with ensuring that there is effective support for the victim child and “non-risk” parent.
- ❖ Whilst there were some individual examples of good practice a key theme is the need for effective planning and management oversight. In cases where this could have been better there was evidence of drift, missed opportunities to intervene earlier and arguably improve the outcomes for the children.

So what’s happening now?

What we’re doing

- ❖ The Derby Safeguarding Children Board training has been reviewed to ensure that key learning from the review is incorporated within our on-going training programme. We will make sure that the importance of effective planning and reviewing of cases is emphasised and remains a core element promoted through training for both practitioners and managers. We are holding a series of briefing events to promote good practice.



- ❖ All agencies will ensure that strategy meetings take place and involve the appropriate agencies. They are also making sure that in cases of alleged child sexual abuse, strategy meetings are held as set out in [Child Protection Section 47 Enquiries](#) procedure to ensure that:
 - Robust and effective plans are made to carry out child protection enquires, including an explicit decision about who is spoken to, how and when this will happen;
 - Appropriate arrangements are put in place where the alleged perpetrator is also a child (as per the [Children who present a risk of harm to others](#) procedure);
 - Explicit consideration is given to 'Think Family' issues including factors such as family history, neglect, domestic violence, parental substance misuse and mental ill health;
 - Explicit consideration is given to the support that will be made available to children affected by the alleged abuse and the non-risk parent.
- ❖ Child protection enquiries and plans are expected to be explicitly scrutinised at Initial Child Protection Conferences.
- ❖ At a later date the DSCB will facilitate an audit to look at how agencies are adhering to our local safeguarding children Child Protection Section 47 Enquiries procedural guidance.
- ❖ Guidance has been provided to Children's Social Care practitioners undertaking Section 47 Child Protection Enquiries that Schools and Education settings may be available in school holiday time. Education settings have been made aware of the potential for contact during holiday periods.
- ❖ Wherever possible the Police and a Paediatrician will agree wording of child protection medical reports so that wording most accurately reflects the medical opinion that will be clearly understood within judicial processes.
- ❖ Guidance is under development for practitioners that sets out:
 - How children subject of an allegation and their siblings are able to discuss their needs. This will include how they should be interviewed in an age appropriate way as individuals and not together;
 - How the views and wishes of children in the family should be obtained and influence the support offered in cases where their parent or carer is reluctant or unwilling for this to occur;
 - A pathway with the sources of support for children, young people and their families affected by child sexual abuse.
- ❖ Education settings are being asked to consider how arrangements might be developed to provide supervision and support for Designated Safeguarding Leads where they are dealing with complex safeguarding cases.



- ❖ Raise awareness with staff about the arrangements for children having contact with Registered Sex Offenders in prison. The key points are:
 - All Registered Sexual Offenders are managed by the National Probation Service (NPS).
 - There is a presumption that all offenders assessed as posing a risk of harm to children are not permitted contact with children.
 - If they wish to have contact with a child (including phone calls and written contact) they must make an application to the Prison Governor and relevant checks would be undertaken with Probation and Social Care before it is decided that a level of contact will be agreed.
 - Practitioners wishing to clarify the arrangements for individual prisoner should contact the National Probation Service. The Offender Manager can then clarify the level of restriction and / or feedback information to the Prison that might alter the level of restriction (including any concerns about phone calls or written contact).

What you can do

- ❖ Make sure you understand the process for child protection Section 47 enquiries, including strategy discussions and meetings, and your role in this.
- ❖ Seek support and supervision from your manager to ensure you are able to reflect on the children and families you are working with to make sure that there are clear assessments, effective plans and that progress is being reviewed.
- ❖ Make sure you are able to attend the training you need to help you carry out your role. More information about the courses available and the pathways help you to choose the right course for you can be found on the [Training Page](#) of the DSCB website.
- ❖ When working with children and families where a family member is in prison, make sure it is safe for them to do so and always ensure if the offender is a Registered Sex Offender that relevant applications and checks have been made to decide the level of contact, if any.
- ❖ Access the [DSCB website](#) and ensure you're familiar with the safeguarding children procedures. The site also has lots of useful information and resources including child sexual abuse, domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation, substance misuse, parental mental health and much more. We will publish future guidance on working with concerns about child sexual abuse on the website.

Together we can make a difference