



city & hackney
safeguarding
children board

Multi-Agency Case Audits

City of London 2017/18

Challenge Escalation
Cross Borough Working
Professional Curiosity
Professional Over-Optimism
Difficult Questions
Management of CSE cases
Substance Misuse Service
Information Sharing

**Child Sexual Abuse, Child Sexual
Exploitation, and Emotional Harm**

Case 1

A school aged child presenting with “sexualised behaviour” was referred to CSC. A strategy meeting was held and an assessment undertaken. No immediate safeguarding concerns were noted and no further child protection actions were taken. The family did not consent to Early Help services offered.

Strengths

- **Timely and accurate assessment** of need including contextualising ‘sexualised’ behaviour in the light of child’s social interaction difficulties and impact of speech and language impairment on understanding.
- Assessment from CAMHS included **observations / voice of the child** and presented a positive experience of health provider services. This was evidenced by parents continued use of behavioural management techniques provided by the CAMHS nurse.
- Although the child moved to an out of borough school, the Educational Psychology service continued their care ensuring that the partnership **did not lose sight of the child**.

Key Messages

Information Sharing

This case highlighted need for CSC to **systematically share the outcomes** of meetings and investigations with partner agencies.

At the time of the audit, the GP was still awaiting feedback from the investigation and had not ‘flagged’ the case appropriately on their systems.

Professionals should seek out information from CSC if unclear on outcomes of investigations / meetings or if they are not contacted.

- **Is your correspondence clear on:**
 - **HOW and WHEN your agency will share outcomes of investigations / meetings?**
 - **The legal status (e.g. s47) of information requests?**
- **Do you contact CSC for more information when unclear on the outcome of an investigation or meeting?**

Professional Curiosity and ‘Difficult Questions’

This case highlighted that some professionals need support to ask parents what may seem to be ‘**difficult questions**’ if they feel they are lacking information.

This was highlighted by a medical professional noting a referral to a specialist service on their IT system but not enquiring any further during the appointment.

- **If you would like gain confidence and skill in this area, the CHSCB offers a one-day course on ‘Difficult Conversations’.**
- **The next date is 12th March 2019. Find out more [HERE](#).**

Cross Borough Working

This case highlighted the need to ensure a **systematic response to cases which cross more than one local authority body**. The London Child Protection Procedures (**Appendix B, section 15, 2017**) reinforces the need for a robust approach by requiring a strategy discussion has attendance from both local authority areas. The meeting should include planning of any investigation and how the actions, including the child's voice, are shared.

- **Do you actively consider engaging professionals from other local authorities when working across borders?**
- **Are minutes clear on the actions needed and which professional is nominated to engage the child and their family?**

Case 2

A school aged young person was referred to CSC due to bullying at school and concerns around out of borough sexual exploitation. The young person was placed on a CP plan which was stepped down after 12 months to a CIN plan. There was a subsequent re-referral (re drug use) and an assessment concluded that there was sufficient support in place.

Strengths

- **Timeliness of referrals** to other risk management forums (e.g. MASE, MARAC) and appropriate referral to school nursing service despite not attending school.
- **Positive communication** between school, CSC and voluntary organisation
- Evidence of **well-coordinated CIN plan** with a consistent message for professionals to focus on helping the young person develop healthy relationships.
- Voluntary organisation provided **young-person led intervention with visits outside of the home**. Ensures an environment is created where the child could focus on their issues without parental distraction and away from the family home.

Key Messages

Information Sharing

As per Case 1, this case noted **issues around information sharing between agencies**. In this case, ELFT did not copy in the GP when the case was closed, and it was unclear whether CAMHS fed back to CSC when mother had declined their service.

Cross Borough Working

This case highlighted that when working with cross border cases, there may be a number of agencies/professionals who are involved and contacting the family. This can be overwhelming for families and it was felt important that early on in a case **agencies should decide the single point of contact for the family and also themselves**.

Another difficulty was identified in ensuring the **voice of the professional is heard at out of borough meetings**. This is especially important when the professional is not in the room to relay their exact thoughts and consideration should be made as to how input is relayed e.g. written vs. verbal.

- **When a large number of professionals are involved, has a lead professional been identified as a single point of contact?**
- **Do you ensure that if you cannot attend a meeting out of borough, your input is relayed accurately e.g. written submission?**

Management of CSE cases

This case highlighted that by using a CP plan when managing risks outside the family, professionals were using the only mechanism available to put a safety plan around the young person.

Families may however feel alienated from professionals and parents in particular may feel penalised for events outside their control.

Use of child protection plans in these circumstances can also have the potential for diverting attention from the real risks the young person is facing. In this case, the young person was missing from education due to bullying by peers and was later back in mainstream education, but in a different school. These actions may compound the feeling of shame and guilt and although direct work was undertaken with the young person to externalise the abuse (by the VCS organisation), this does not seem to have been echoed in practice by the partnership.

Professionals felt strongly that whilst trying to improve outcomes for the young person, it is often the victim of abuse who is made to move schools rather than work being undertaken to educate the wider cohort (e.g. the impact of sharing images and the legal ramifications).

Contextual Safeguarding activity in Hackney is considering the current system used to manage risks and agencies now have an opportunity to think creatively in the management of cases. Early findings will also be fed back to City of London.

Substance Misuse Service – professional awareness of remit

This case highlighted that some professionals may not be aware that the **Substance Misuse Services in Hackney** accepts referrals for children and young people who live in City of London.

- To refer a children / young people to the Substance Misuse Service, please call 020 8356 7377 (Monday – Friday 9.00am – 9.00pm) or email yhsms@hackney.gov.uk.

Case 3

A pre-teen young person known to CSC since she was less than a year old. Mother unable to meet emotional needs of child due to traumatic relationships with family and ex-partner.

Strengths

- Evidence of professionals' ability to **self-reflect and passion to make a positive difference** in this young person's life.
- Professional viewpoint that school has gone '**above and beyond**' to care for child including years of weekly counselling sessions.

Key Messages

Professional Over-Optimism

This case highlighted the impact of professional **over optimism in parental ability to change**, cases being allowed to drift and parental dependency on support put in place by professionals. This was exacerbated by unclear outcomes for the child and subsequent lack of clarity/evidence where the child's needs were not being met.

- **Is your involvement child-focused and clear on the outcomes which should be met within the child's timeframe?**
- **Do you record / log evidence of parental involvement / non-involvement?**
- **At the time of creating a plan, are all professionals in agreement of the escalation route should outcomes not be met?**

Challenge and Escalation

Complex cases can have a deep emotional impact on professionals and it was evident that professionals cared deeply about this young person. Professionals rely on their strong working relationships but this may at times impede the **confidence to challenge, escalate and hold difficult conversations** not only with parents but also with members of the professional network.

This audit also indicated the importance of professionals having the opportunity to step back and reflect on cases, either in supervision or in a forum for independent review of complex cases.

- **Do you seek professional support from your agency to help you cope with the emotional issues that may arise as a result of complex cases?**
- **Do you raise complex cases in supervision, perhaps asking for an impartial perspective?**
- **Are you aware of the CHSCB Escalation Policy? If not, find it [HERE](#).**

Information Sharing

This case highlighted that the importance of contacting the **Safeguarding School Nurse** for children of school age who are displaying significant needs. In this case, a number of organisations were working around the child and so this service could have been engaged at an earlier point.

- **Are you aware of the Safeguarding School Nursing Service? It provides targeted, personalised care and support to vulnerable or disabled children and young people aged 5 -19 years.**
- **Contact the team [HERE](#).**