

Learning from the Case: Child N

A summary of the case reviewed:

The serious case review (SCR) concerns the services provided for a child who tragically died, aged one. The child was found dead in the flat where they had lived with their mother. Child N had been the subject of contested proceedings for residence and contact in the family court between the mother and the father. The child is believed to have been in the mother's care during the last days of life.

The initial post mortem examination was unable to ascertain the cause of death of Child N; however it noted that the child did not have the commonly observed symptoms of unexplained sudden infant death.

How was learning achieved?

The case review followed the more traditional SCR model. It was overseen by a panel representing all agencies involved. They were led by an independent chair and jointly drafted a terms of reference. Each agency nominated a colleague to complete a chronology of events and a written report.

An overview author read these reports and met with colleagues to collate an overview report. The aim was to learn the following:

- were there issues with individual professional judgment or actions?
- how effective was the family–professional interaction?
- was there independent oversight of the case?
- how well had they worked together in assessment?
- how well had they worked together in response to incidents and crises?

This approach generated the learning detailed below. The family also contributed to the review and provided their perspective on work undertaken with them.

Learning Points for Practitioners

- **Be curious** – Practitioners need to take a more forensic approach to identifying and monitoring neglect and possible safeguarding issues. This could be done by asking additional professionals to complete the checklist and discuss findings. As identifying neglect is a matter of professional judgment, it is critical that as much objective evidence as possible is brought to the judgment
- **Understand** the referral process and the threshold of needs to ensure you make the correct referrals to the correct services to offer the child and family support. Provide complete information to the best quality that you can.
- **Good Practice** - Ensure that you are using all available tools and resources, especially the OSCB Neglect tool which has been revised and improved. The OSCB Neglect tool has been integrated into Frameworki, for use by children's social workers. It is now required to be completed for all children subject to a child protection plan for neglect and all children coming to legal panel.

- **Tools and Training** - There is a need for training/information-sharing to ensure the opportunities and possibilities offered by the toolkit are understood and utilised. Utilise the Model of Good Multi-Agency Practice and Information Sharing Protocol, the Threshold of Needs Matrix and the drug and alcohol screening tools, and make use of the specialised training available from OSCB.
- **Understand** the support services and other organisations involved with the family. Ensure you understand what interventions are being provided and that these interventions are suitable for the family and the situation.
- **Assessment** - Professionals should ensure that each child in a family where there is possible neglect or the child could be at risk, is offered the same level of assessment however well the child appears to be doing
- **Support** the parent/s throughout the time that they receive safeguarding support, contribute to joint plans and contingency plans, and help determine risk, with the social worker
- **Do not automatically take the parents/Individual's information as fact**, check it with the social worker or other services the child and family are engaged in. This will help to build a true picture of the family and the situation.

Key messages for inter-agency learning

- **Use the No Names Consultation** for practical advice if you have a concern and are unsure whether to make a referral.

Resources

- **OSCB training** – OSCB offers a variety of face-to-face and online courses
[Training | Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board](#)
- **Multi-agency safeguarding procedures** – The OSCB multi-agency procedures cover a wide variety of situations you may encounter. You can access them at
<http://oxfordshirescb.proceduresonline.com/>
- **Good multi-agency practice guidance** – The OSCB have created a model of good multi-agency practice incorporating the Local Assessment Protocol.
http://www.oscb.org.uk/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/OSCB%20Local%20Assessment%20Protocol.pdf
- **Seven Golden Rules for Information Sharing** – Professionals should familiarise themselves with the golden rules for sharing information. There is a downloadable flyer available on the OSCB website:
http://portal.oxfordshire.gov.uk/content/publicnet/other_sites/oscb/documents/professionals/Neglect/7_Golden_Rules.pdf
- **Neglect Tool** –
[Childcare and Development Checklist June 2014](#)

The purpose of a serious case review is to:

- 'Establish what lessons can be learned about the way in which local professionals and organisations work individually and together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Identify clearly what those lessons are within and between agencies, how and within what timescales they will be acted on, and what is expected to change as a result and
- As a consequence, improve intra and inter-agency working and better safeguard and promote the welfare of children'

A serious case review (SCR) is not concerned with the attribution of culpability which is a matter for a criminal court.