



Eyes on – Enhancing our Practice

Learning from the Audit: Parental Substance Misuse

A summary:

In August 2012 Oxfordshire Drug and Alcohol Team, Public Health, were asked to conduct an audit of Children's Social Care from a parental substance misuse perspective. We audited three case files of children with parents with substance misuse issues; one of a pregnancy/newborn baby, one of a child under 9, and one of an adolescent.

The aim of the audit was to look at the identification and understanding of parental substance misuse, multi-agency work, and involvement of agencies in the care planning and support for the child and family throughout their engagement.

Following the audit of children's social care, in April 2013 Oxfordshire DAAT conducted a safeguarding children audit in each of the commissioned adult drug and alcohol services in Oxfordshire. 72 case files were audited across 4 services, focussing on links and joint work with children's social care, safeguarding referrals and on-going involvement and information sharing.

The findings and learning points from the two audits were fed back to the Quality Assurance & Audit subgroup of the OSCB.

Findings

- **Information sharing** could be more consistent between agencies, with a mutual understanding of what information can be shared and the correct process to share it.
- **Assessment and management of risk** can be better from all agencies, with a better understanding of substance misuse and interventions, the changing levels of risk, and the impact on the child.
- **Positive working relationships** and key contacts within agencies make multi-agency working more successful.
- **Communication** needs to be timely to allow for preparation of reports and attendance at key meetings.

Themes in common with other audits in Oxfordshire

- ✓ Joint planning could be stronger and provide tangible, successful outcomes
- ✓ Managing risk on a multi-agency basis could be improved
- ✓ Holding partners and agencies to account is in our interest



Three learning points for managers

- **Audit:** Check that parental substance misuse is understood and being identified by staff. Referrals and on-going communication with children social care/drug and alcohol services is happening and is being evidenced
- **Better communication:** Ensure staff understand what is required by each service for reporting and attendance for child protection conferences and core groups/meetings and timely requests are made to the correct people
- **Good Practice:** ensure that practitioners are using all available tools and resources, especially the drug and alcohol screening tools/'neglect toolkit' Awareness of Neglect | Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board and making use of the training available from OSCB and Drug and Alcohol Services

Action points for practitioners in drug and alcohol services

- **Be proactive** - Ensure you have identified the social worker working with the child and family and have on-going communication and share information
- **Understand the referral process** to ensure you make the right kind of referral and know what to expect. Provide complete information to the best quality that you can
- **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
- **Language** - ensure you have a joint understanding of the language used, such as 'illicit drug free' or 'in recovery' as these can mean different things to different people.
- **Use the No Names Consultation** for practical advice if you have a concern and are unsure whether to make a referral

Action points for social care practitioners working with parental substance misuse

- **Ensure** you have an understanding of the services and interventions available to the substance misusing parent and how to refer.
- **Language** - ensure you have a joint understanding of the language used, such as 'illicit drug free' or 'in recovery' as these can mean different things to different people.
- **Confirm** the details of the agency or drug and alcohol worker working with the parent. Do not take the individual's information as fact
- **Ensure** you have identified the key worker or agency working with the child and family and have on-going communication
- **Give notice** to drug and alcohol agency or key worker when information, reports or attendance is needed.
- **Refer the child** to the CAN worker at the local Early Intervention Service hub for support around their parent's substance misuse.



Key messages for inter-agency learning

- Promote the guide to good multi agency working and check out the procedures
- Embed a shared use and understanding of the screening tools
- Promote training for practitioners to gain an understanding of substance misuse and the impact on the child

Remember to use the resources available....

Seek advice and support from other agencies – If you have any queries or questions you can contact other agencies for advice and information, or reassurance on concerns.

Reminder to practitioners

- **OSCB online training** – the OSCB offers a variety of face-to-face and online courses to suit most safeguarding needs. If there is a course you feel we should be running, tell us! [Booking Training](#)
- **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/>
- **Thresholds document** – Professionals need to know the thresholds for accessing services within Oxfordshire. The OSCB has on the website a copy of the Thresholds document. You can access it here: [The OSCB Thresholds of Needs Matrix](#)
- **Good multi-agency practice guidance** – The OSCB have created a model of good multi-agency practice incorporating the Local Assessment Protocol. [Good multi-agency practice guidance](#)
- **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: [7_Golden_Rules.pdf](#)
- **Serious Case Review – Child H**
http://portal.oxfordshire.gov.uk/content/publicnet/other_sites/oscb/documents/new/about-the-board/case-reviews/Child-H-Overview-Report-Sept-2014.pdf
- **Drug and Alcohol Screening Tools** – In the Parental Substance Misuse Toolkit http://portal.oxfordshire.gov.uk/content/publicnet/other_sites/oscb/documents/professionals/PSM/PSM_toolkit.pdf
- **NSPCC – learning from case reviews around parental substance misuse**
http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/resourcesforprofessionals/scrs/briefing-substance-misuse_wda99489.html
- **Drug and Alcohol Team, Public Health** www.oxfordshiredaat.org for up to date information on all drug and alcohol services for adults and young people.
- **OSCB Substance Misuse and Parenting Training, OSCB Drug and Alcohol Awareness training**
<http://www.oscb.org.uk/training.html>
- **Drug and Alcohol Team, Public Health** Tel: 01865 328607
oxfordshiredaat@oxfordshire.gov.uk



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- **No Names Consultation** – Use the no names consultation service for advice and information on a child or young person, without having to divulge full information. Contact your Locality Social Worker who will advise you on next steps and whether you need to make a referral

North: 01865 323039

South: 01865 323041

City: 01865 328563