



Learning from Local Reviews 2021 Thematic Briefing Note 3

Background

In 2019, the TWSP introduced the new arrangements for safeguarding in Telford and Wrekin, in line with the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 statutory guidance. Under this guidance, all serious incidents of neglect or abuse notified to Ofsted are considered by TWSP through a Rapid Review process. This Rapid Review identifies immediate learning and considers if the incident requires further consideration through a National Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) carried out by the National Panel or a Local Learning Review undertaken through the TWSP. Local Learning Reviews have also been undertaken for cases that do not meet the threshold to notify Ofsted, but where learning can be identified.

Some of these cases have ongoing criminal proceedings and full learning reviews will be published once the proceedings have concluded. This briefing identifies the key themes from the Rapid Reviews that have been carried out in 2020 ensuring that this learning informs practice across the wider partnership. The briefing also includes learning from a case that had previously been considered under the previous Serious Case Review arrangements.

Theme 1: Support for families with young children during the COVID-19 pandemic

What we have learned: The importance of maintaining contact and face to face visits for families with new born children.

What you should do: Practitioners should continue to remain vigilant to the risks of non-accidental injuries to children as the pressures placed on families due to the pandemic can create a “pressure cooker effect”. The National Safeguarding Practice Review Panel has recommended that all families with a baby born during lockdown should have a least one face to face visit from a midwife or health visitor.

Theme 2: Parental mental health issues and Child Protection meetings

What we have learned: The importance of ensuring the needs of parents with care and support needs are met e.g. mental health needs are considered where there are child protection proceedings.

What you should do: Ensure that where a parent/carer has care and support needs, the Social Worker allocated to the parent /carer is informed of child protection proceedings, and is able to assess any safeguarding implications of this process for the parent/carer.

Theme 3: Voice and experience of the child

What we have learned: Records do not always show the views of the child and what their day to day experience is.

What you should do: Ensure that records include the views and experience of the child and where there is non-attendance at appointments, this should be recorded as “Was not brought” rather than “Did not attend”.

Where there are incidents of domestic abuse in a household, the voice of the child is heard and recorded including their lived experience and the impact of this on their life.

Theme 4: Families moving to Telford and Wrekin

What we have learned: Families who move to Telford & Wrekin may have relocated as a result of safeguarding risks such as child exploitation in the previous area.

For other families who have moved to Telford & Wrekin there may be vulnerabilities that are not recognised in the relocation process e.g. through the National Housing Scheme.

What should you do: When local safeguarding partners, including children’s services, housing providers or the Youth Offending Service, are contacted by a services in another local authority area who are looking to relocate a family due to risks from child exploitation you should work with Family Connect to ensure the placing authority understand the local context and risks when considering housing locations.

When children’s services in another local authority supports a family to relocate to Telford and Wrekin due to the risk of child exploitation, ensure there is a multi-agency hand over involving key agencies from both local authority areas including where appropriate children’s services, youth offending service, housing, West Mercia Police and CCG. The recent experience of using virtual meetings has shown that this can be a helpful way to share information and co-ordinate work across a range of partners without travelling.

Where a family has relocated to Telford and Wrekin and there has been little previous contact with services, practitioners should use their professional curiosity to understand the current situation for the family and support available e.g. families may move to Telford without having a support network in the area and for families where the children are pre-school age this may be a particular issue.

Theme 5: Recording of detailed information on information systems

What we have learned: The recording of alerts on information systems should be sufficiently detailed so that anyone reading the alert fully understands the nature of the alert. This will avoid individual interpretation and misunderstanding.

What you should do: All safeguarding partners should ensure that any information recorded on an electronic recording system is explicit and detailed, so that it is not open to interpretation and misunderstanding.

Theme 6: Lack of family engagement with Early Help & Support, and closure of cases

What we have learned: There may be complex family dynamics in families referred for early help and support, and in situations where there is a history of domestic abuse, there may be allegations from both parents. Parents may agree to Early Help support initially, but it may prove difficult to ensure that the risks for children in the family have been fully understood if parents do not engage; particularly if one parent is absent.

What you should do: In cases where one or both parents/carers do not engage with early help support, and there remain ongoing concerns for the family, practitioners should contact Family Connect to ensure that the full picture of family risk is known before the case is closed.

Theme 7: Child Criminal Exploitation

What we have learned: Where a child who lives in Telford and Wrekin returns to an area where there they are affiliated to a gang and child criminal exploitation activities in this area, Police and Youth Justice Service should inform Children's Social Care in Telford and Wrekin when the child is arrested or a suspect in criminal and/or high risk behaviour.

Where a child or young person who lives in Telford and Wrekin is arrested in another area due to offences related to child criminal exploitation, Children's Social Care should be requested to provide information to the court where the case is heard to inform the proceedings and any sentencing options considered, including the risk to self and others.

What you should do: Work with partner organisations in other areas to ensure that information about risk and harm informs both Social Care and criminal justice proceedings.

Theme 8: Diagnosis of non-accidental injury to a child

What we have learned: Incomplete information sent to the specialist provider that provides the clinical information but not the differential diagnosis that relates to non-accidental injury, results in delays in decision making, including safeguarding risks for siblings.

What you should do: Ensure that all relevant safeguarding and clinical information is recorded and transferred with the patient when they are transferred to another acute provider.

Theme 9: Lack of engagement by a young person in their mental health assessment

What we have learned: If a professional is having difficulty with the engagement of a child with mental health needs, then a mental health assessment can be completed in any environment to suit the child's needs.

What you should do: Safeguarding partners should liaise with the relevant partners, in order to establish the best place to assess the child and identify the service most likely to receive a positive response from the child;

Theme 10: Safeguarding concerns when a family is away from home in a different local authority area

What we have learned: A child may be in the care of parents/carers who are identified as suspects in a criminal offence relating to harm to a child, but the family are temporarily located in another area.

What you should do: Safeguarding partners should liaise with the relevant police authority to consider use of Police Powers of Protection and powers of arrest, to ensure safety of the child when returning to the home authority.

Theme 11: Recognition of neglect

What we have learned: Cases of neglect – including the daily lived experience of the child – can present in a combination of ways, which, when presented individually, may not meet threshold for services. When this information is viewed together as a larger picture however, the threshold for services will be met.

Appropriate escalation of information is important to help inform all agencies involved with a child/family of the wider picture, and ensure that action is taken in a timely manner.

What you should do: All safeguarding partners should ensure that any information is shared appropriately with safeguarding partners, to ensure that the wider picture is fully understood by all agencies, and action can be taken as soon as possible to provide support to the children/family.

Theme 12: Availability of the Emergency Duty Team to respond to urgent safeguarding inquiries

What we have learned: The EDT call centre is only responsible for taking the name and number of the caller and cannot assess the urgency of the case. However they will immediately pass this information on to the EDT duty social worker. It is acknowledged that when there is one duty social worker that manages all incoming enquiries they may not be able to respond immediately to every safeguarding call but will prioritise these and respond accordingly.

It has been recognised that during the pandemic there has been increased demand on the out of hours service and in response to this the Local Authority have provided 6 months of additional social worker capacity to address periods of high demand. This will be reviewed at the end of the 6 month period.

What you should do: If you have safeguarding emergency out of hours in relation to adults or children you should contact the Out of Hours Emergency Duty Team.

Theme 13: Use of advocates

What we have learned: The use of advocates at the earliest possible point when instigating care proceedings is valuable, ensuring that all family members have advocates from the start of their case, with whom they can build a strong relationship and have appropriate support.

What you should do: All agencies to ensure that all professionals are aware of the support available by an advocate when care proceedings have been initiated, for the whole family.

Theme 14: Professional curiosity

What we have learned: Responding to presenting issues in isolation and a lack of professional curiosity can lead to missed opportunities to identify less obvious indicators of vulnerability or significant harm.

What you should do: Professional curiosity is a combination of looking, listening, asking direct questions, checking out and reflecting on information received to understand what is happening within a family rather than making assumptions or accepting things at face value. It means you should:

- Gather, share and record information
- Don't take a snapshot, be inquisitive and professionally curious
- Get the whole picture including the family history, to inform assessments and decision making
- Challenge and escalate where appropriate
- Think the unthinkable

Further information

The National Safeguarding Practice Review Panel Annual Report 2018/19 identifies the key themes from the Rapid Reviews that have been carried out:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/870033/Child_Safeguarding_Practice_Review_Panel_Annual_Report_2018_2019.pdf