



May 2020

Serious Case Review in relation to George

Response from Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP)

In October 2018, Cumbria LSCB, now CSCP, began a Serious Case Review (SCR) in relation to the services that were provided to George and their family. The review scrutinised the work of the following agencies:

- Children's Services
- General Practitioner
- Police
- Health Visiting Service and Strengthening Families Service CPFT (now NCIC)
- Maternity Services NCUHT (now NCIC)
- Barnardo's
- Nursery

The full findings of the SCR are set out in the overview report which has been published alongside this response.

There has been a delay in the publication of this SCR due to ongoing legal proceedings. Given the practice considered in this review is now from 2 years ago, a considerable amount has changed to improve practice across the former Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), now CSCP and its member agencies, and the lessons and recommendations from this SCR are reflective of that.

Individual agencies involved in the review have already taken forward the learning outlined in the report, and the LSCB and CSCP have also been implementing the learning identified prior to the publication of this report.

The table below sets out the main points of learning from the SCR and how the CSCP will further ensure practice improves across all services for Children in Cumbria. Any reference to learning for the LSCB will be taken forward by the CSCP.

The work to implement the recommendations and to monitor their impact on practice will become part of the long term work of the CSCP and member agencies. The implementation of these recommendations will be managed through the Board and the long-term implications will be tested through the Board's Performance Management and Quality Assurance (PMQA) framework to evidence the expected impacts and these will be reported in the Board's Annual Report.

Gill Rigg

Independent Chair – Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership

May 2020

THEME 1: Predisposing Risks

Finding G1

Neither of George’s parents or Mother’s partner had a positive childhood, all had encountered numerous adverse experiences including neglect, sexual abuse, domestic abuse and parental bereavement. Although these predisposing risks were acknowledged by agencies working with the family, a thorough assessment of what risk these adverse experiences posed to George was missing in this case, this included when Mother’s partner joined the family.

A number of agencies held information on Mother’s partner but did not make relevant and proportionate checks within their own agency records when it became known Mother was in a relationship with him. Only Children’s Social Care had undertaken checks prior to the Child Protection Conference.

Lesson G1.1

Information held about parents and those living with or having extensive contact with a child, including historic information, needs to be analysed by all agencies and considered in respect of the risks and on-going impact on the child at all relevant points of the case.

Lesson G1.2

Any new information emerging requires thorough consideration, which may lead to a change in the plan for the child.

Lesson G1.3

Families like this one should be made aware that they are likely to require on-going involvement with support services due to the challenges they will face because of their own history.

Recommendation 1

The learning from this review should be disseminated widely.

Recommendation 2

This report should be shared with the LSCB in the area where Mother and George lived prior to time period considered by this SCR.

Recommendation 3

How can you be assured that the level of service provision to children with young parents who have predisposing vulnerabilities is sufficiently focused and resourced to meet the need in certain areas of Cumbria with high needs?

CSCP Context / Actions already taken/ CSCP Action

The report has been shared with the LSCB area where Mother and George lived prior to Cumbria.

The CSCP will publish a newsletter following the publication of this review outlining all the lessons learned

CSCP to further embed training and support in analysis and decision making including the use of family history and context

CSCP multi-agency audit templates ask agencies to look at how parenting capacity is being assessed and responded to and include a question asking if significant adults who are involved in the lives of children are identified and assessed as part of the assessment and planning for the children.

How will we know

Multi-agency audit will show how need, risk, parenting capacity and the context of the family is assessed and responded to appropriately

Multi-agency audits will show that significant adults who are involved in the lives of children are identified and assessed as part of the assessment and planning for the children.

THEME 2: Parental Self-Report

Finding G2

Mother was not always open with the professionals involved, and there was a feeling that she would only share significant information when pressed or if she required assistance. There were a number of occasions in this case where Mother was felt to be either saying what professionals wanted to hear or where she didn't share information. Mother's partners was also not open and honest with professionals.

Professionals need to ensure they triangulate what parents are saying by establishing the facts, gathering evidence about what is actually happening, and communicating well with all involved. While there were examples of good information sharing in this case, there were also areas where this could be improved and where Mother's reports could have been checked with other professionals.

It is important that professionals share information and communicate to ensure that they do not rely on self-report. If information is not shared, professionals need to question this and challenge each other. This includes using the Cumbria LSCB escalation of professional disagreement policy if required. There were a number of times in the case where respectful challenge could have occurred.

Lesson G2.1

Professionals working in safeguarding need to exercise respectful uncertainty, healthy scepticism and be supported to always consider if they have the whole picture

Lesson G2.2

Good information sharing is key, as is professional curiosity. However there are a number of barriers such as time, staffing, data systems, protocols and concern about consent.

Lesson G2.3

Not all practitioners are aware of, or use, the CLSCB escalation policy.

Recommendation 4

The CLSCB to seek assurance from partner agencies regarding their promotion of and confidence in using the CLSCB policy for escalating professional disagreements.

CSCP Context / Actions already taken/CSCP Action

CSCP to further raise awareness of the escalation policy via 5 minute briefing and through training

Assurance to be sought from agencies regarding promotion and use of escalation policy via S.11 Safeguarding Audit

CSCP to produce briefing on information sharing

CSCP to undertake further workshops at Practitioner forums on information sharing

How will we know

Our practitioner survey will tell us that professionals are aware of the escalation policy and have confidence in using it

Multi-agency audits will show that there is effective information sharing

THEME 3: Step Down to and Closure of Child in Need

Finding G3

At a core group it was identified that George's Mother had entered a new relationship and was spending a considerable amount of time with her new partner, two weeks following this a RCPC was held. The group agreed to step the case down to Child in Need, despite the Police disclosing information in the meeting in relation to the Partner about historic concerns. This had not been shared with the social worker by Mother's Partner when she had asked him about his history. There was not a robust consideration of the information shared and what risk this may pose to George.

Although it was discussed in supervision that the introduction of a new male into the home increased the vulnerability for George, there was no re-assessment undertaken.

Lesson G 3.1

Professionals need encouragement, support and confidence to reconsider their position when new information is shared during a meeting.

CSCP Context / Actions already taken/CSCP Action

The CSCP to undertake a thematic multi-agency audit of Child in Need, looking at cases stepped down to Child in Need and closed following a period of being open to Child in Need

How will we know

Audit findings will evidence appropriate step down and closure of cases and the appropriate sharing of information with all relevant agencies

How we will disseminate and evidence the learning

| Dissemination of the Learning | Specific Actions | Subgroup(s) or single agency | Deadline | Expected Impact and how it will be tested |
|--|---|--|----------|---|
| <p>The CSCP will ensure that the lessons identified in this SCR are publicised, included in learning materials and disseminated throughout the practitioners in the CSCP</p> | <p>Training materials will be reviewed to ensure the lessons are included.</p> <p>Policies and procedures (P&P) will be reviewed to ensure the lessons are included</p> | <p>Learning & Improvement Subgroup</p> <p>CSCP Board</p> | | <p>Practitioners should use the lessons from this review in their everyday interactions with children, young people and their families</p> |
| | <p>The website will be updated to reflect the lessons from this review.</p> | <p>CSCP Support Office</p> | | <p>The CSCP conducts regular surveys of staff and will include a question to ascertain how well the lessons from this review are known, understood and being addressed in practice.</p> |
| | <p>A specific newsletter will be published to cover the lessons from this review and other recent SCR</p> | | | |
| | <p>The CSCP will conduct a number of workshops and a conference to raise the profile of the lessons in this and the other SCR being published.</p> | <p>Learning & Improvement Subgroup</p> | | |
| | <p>Assurance will be sought from all agencies that the lessons from this SCR are being used – this will be done through the 2020 Safeguarding Audit (Section 11)</p> | <p>CSCP Board</p> | | |