

18 July 2016

Serious Case Review in relation to the death in 2014 of Child R.

Response from Cumbria Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

In March 2015, Cumbria LSCB began a Serious Case Review (SCR) in relation to the services that were provided to Child R and/or his family. The review scrutinised the work of the following agencies:

- Cumbria Police
- University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay - NHS Foundation Trust –emergency department services
- GP Medical Practice – primary care
- Cumbria County Council – children’s social care, school improvement, education welfare and early help
- Primary and Secondary Schools
- Cumbria Partnership Foundation Trust – Community Health Services including School Nursing and Health Visiting Services
- Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- GMW Mental Health NHS Salford (Unity)
- North West Ambulance Services

The full findings of the SCR are set out in the overview report which should be read alongside this response.

On page 2 there is information regarding changes to operational responses. The table that starts on page 3 sets out the main points of learning from the Serious Case Review for the LSCB and how the LSCB will ensure practice improves across all services for Children in Cumbria, with dates when impacts are expected to be realised. The table on page 7 shows how the LSCB will use and disseminate the learning from this case.

The work to implement the recommendations and to monitor their impact on practice will become part of the long term work of the LSCB and member agencies. The implementation of these recommendations will be managed through the Board’s Business Group and the long-term implications will be tested through the Board’s Performance Management and Quality Assurance Group to evidence the expected impacts and these will be reported in the Board’s Annual Reports.

Gill Rigg

Independent Chair – Cumbria LSCB

Changes to Operational Responses

Focus family - at the time of this incident, it would not appear that the family met the Troubled Family criteria. However under the new expanded programme, the criteria to identify and support families (delivered in Cumbria through the Focus Family programme) has significantly increased, and the family would have met the criteria for referral onto the programme for consideration of additional support. The Focus Family team will work with Adult and Child focused services to enable effective identification, referral, and support to be provided for families promoting a “Whole Family” approach.

Early Help - since this incident under the leadership of LSCB and support of the Local Authority’s Early Help team, organisations have significantly increased the understanding of, and support offered, at an Early Help level. The use of Early Help Assessments has for example risen by 266% from 2013 (June-November) when compared to the same period 2015. Additionally, Early Help and Family Support panels have been launched in Cumbria in February 2016. These provide a multi-agency arena to discuss children and young people when an organisation, such as a school, may need additional support and advice in respect of responding to needs at an Early Help level, and identify options for offering support via a Team Around the Family approach.

Safeguarding “front door” - since this incident, the Council and its statutory partners, under the leadership of the LSCB, has implemented a Safeguarding Hub where any concerns about children and their welfare, are considered using a multi-agency approach.

School Nursing Service-Since this incident there have been changes made to the way in which the school nursing is commissioned currently. Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust remains the sole provider of the school nursing service. The way in which the service is commissioned is undergoing significant change, whereby commissioning has shifted from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to local authority Public Health commissioners. Currently (as of March 2016) a consultation is underway regarding the wider 0-19 agenda. However, it should be noted that at the time of Child R’s death, and as is the case currently, each secondary school in Cumbria has a named school nurse.

LSCB RESPONSE

THEME 1: Transition arrangements from Junior School to Secondary School

Finding R1
In this case the transition plan to Secondary Schools had limited impact on attendance.
Lesson R1.1
<p>Transition plans should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include well-defined success criteria • Include a defined timescale for completion and review • Record the voice of the child
LSCB Action to take
The Local Authority Early Help and Learning Service, working with the LSCB Education subgroup and Cumbria Alliance of System Leaders (CASL) will promote effective practice in drawing up effective Transition Plans. (Autumn Term 2016)
How will we know
LSCB Education subgroup to include questions about effective attendance management in Safeguarding Audit and sampling (October 2016)

THEME 2: Effectiveness of Attendance plans

Finding R2

In this case the attendance plans for Child R were not effective and were subject to a degree of drift. They were not successful because the school did not follow up in a sufficiently robust or timely manner on its own attendance improvement plans.

Lesson R2.1

Attendance plans should:

- Be child focused
- Be robustly followed through with parents in line with school policy and practice and local authority guidance.
- Reviews are held in line with agreed policy and practice.
- Drift is avoided.
- Medical/health evidence of absence on health grounds is corroborated to inform attendance plans
- Parents/Carers and students should be actively involved in plans around transition and attendance and have a direct voice in these processes.
- Consultation should take place with the local authority Inclusion Service in line with current policy and guidance.

LSCB Action to take

The Local Authority Early Help and Learning Services, working with the LSCB Education subgroup and CASL, will promote effective practice in drawing up Attendance Plans (including at transitions between schools). (Autumn Term 2016)

In all Attendance Plans, where attendance falls below 85%, consideration should be given to initiating an Early Help Assessment with reasons for not proceeding with this clearly recorded. (September 2016)

How will we know

LSCB Education subgroup to include questions about effective attendance management in Safeguarding Audit and sampling (October 2016).

THEME 3: Use of Early Help in Schools

Finding R3

In this case the secondary school did not positively embrace the take up and implementation of the Cumbria LSCB Early Help strategy.

Lesson R3.1

School staff should consider undertaking an Early Help Assessment as part of a wider package of support when a student's absence reaches or exceeds the Department for Education (DfE) threshold for 'Persistent Absence'.

LSCB Context / Actions already taken/ LSCB Action

There has been a 450% increase in initiation levels in the period from 2013 to April 2016

Schools have all been offered training both on a school centred basis but also as part of the wider multi agency provision. The Early Help Team attend on request to talk to year heads, safeguarding leads and pastoral care staff – to promote the use of Early Help.

The levels of initiation in schools are monitored by EHO's both in the Safeguarding Hub and in the Districts and some schools are identified as needing to be encouraged to engage more effectively. A RAG rating approach is used to record schools who have engaged and therefore those who need to be targeted for support and training.

The development of the Early Help panels allow schools to more easily refer 'stuck' Early Help Assessments and work is being undertaken to encourage key educational establishments to attend the panels as panel members.

Action:

Early Help Team and Education Subgroup will work together to review attendance statistics for schools and correlation with Early Help Assessment to identify any schools with high levels of absence and low take up of Early Help. (December 2016)

How will we know

Take up of Early Help in schools with high absence will increase and outcomes for children will improve.

Lesson R3.2

Where an Early Help Assessment is undertaken because of persistent absence due to health needs the School Nurse must be involved.

LSCB Action to take

LSCB Chair to seek assurance from the 0-19 public Health Commissioners that the service specification for School Nurses to be practically involved in Early Help.

How will we know

Assurance will be received and evidence provided that schools nurses are practically involved in Early Help Plans through audit.

THEME 4: Recognising persistent absence as a potential indicator of Neglect

Finding R4
In this case the school did not consider the high levels of absence as a potential indicator of Neglect
Lesson R4.1
Schools staff should consider the possibility of neglect when a student's absence reaches or exceeds the DfE threshold for 'Persistent Absence', and whether there are any issues around the young person's health and general development.
LSCB Action
LSCB Neglect subgroup to ensure that the DfE's 'Persistent Absence' threshold is included as a potential indicator in the Neglect tools, policies and strategies. (September 2016)
How will we know
The LSCB will seek assurance from schools through the Safeguarding Audit for 2016 which will include a question regarding the potential indicators for neglect and its relationship with attendance (December 2016).

THEME 5: Impact of parents' mental health and/or substance misuse on their children

Finding R5
In this case practitioners did not consider the impact of parents' mental health and substance misuse on the child's emotional wellbeing.
Lesson R5.1
When a parent or significant family member (regardless of their level of contact with the child) has mental health and/or substance misuse issues practitioners must always consider and take account of the impact of this on the emotional wellbeing of the child
LSCB Action
The Early Help Team and the Education Subgroup will work together to identify good examples of good Early Help and Attendance Plans - where there has been consideration of parents' issues and where there has been good consideration of the impact on the child and the child's voice is evident – these will be developed into a learning resource for schools through the Learning and Improvement Subgroup of the LSCB.
LSCB Templates for plans and assessments will include parental mental health as a risk factor. (September 2016)
CYP forum to consider a future session on impact of parental mental health and/or substance misuse. (April 2017)
How will we know
Attendance and Early Help Plans, where there are parents or significant adults with mental health and/or substance misuse, will show good assessment and planning in terms of the child's emotional wellbeing – evidence through Early Help panels and Audit. (January 2017)

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
The LSCB will ensure that the lessons identified in this SCR are publicised, included in learning materials and disseminated throughout the practitioners in the LSCB	Training materials will be reviewed to ensure the lessons are included.	Learning & Improvement Subgroup	November 2016	<p>Practitioners should use the lessons from this review in their everyday interactions with children, young people and their families</p> <p>The LSCB 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>
	Policies and procedures (P&P) will be reviewed to ensure the lessons are included	Policy and Procedures group Subgroup	August 2016	
	The website will be updated to reflect the lessons from this review.	Communications and Engagement Subgroup	August 2016	
	A specific newsletter will be published to cover the lessons from this review and other recent SCR		July 2016	
	The LSCB will conduct a number of workshops and a conference to raise the profile of the lessons in this and the other SCR being published.		Through-out 2016-17	
Assurance will be sought from all agencies that the lessons from this SCR are being used – this will be done through the 2016-17 Safeguarding Audit (Section 11)	Performance Management and Quality Assurance Group	May 2017		