



Learning Together: Manager's Briefing

How do we know we are working together well to safeguard children & young people?

This short briefing is aimed at managers and designated leads who work with children and families in Brighton & Hove. It presents the findings and recommendations from a recent audit regarding Domestic Violence & Abuse (DV&A). Brighton & Hove LSCB is committed to informing you regularly of the outcomes from multi-agency audit activity undertaken by the LSCB. It is important that the learning from quality assurance (QA) is shared with partners and used meaningfully to change practice and improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. Therefore, after each QA activity, we will provide feedback to managers & practitioners on individual cases present the findings in a **full report** to the LSCB and present the **key findings** in a briefing each quarter. If managers would like access to the full audit report which further breaks down findings per agency please contact us at LSCB@Brighton-hove.gov.uk

Domestic Violence & Abuse (DV&A)

Safeguarding children exposed to domestic violence and abuse (DV&A) is important to Brighton & Hove LSCB, due to the risks posed to children living with DV&A, and its prevalence in our city. Domestic abuse is a crime and a major social problem affecting many families. It is a consistent feature of serious case reviews and is the most frequent contributory factor for children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP).

In September 2014 Brighton & Hove LSCB carried out an in depth multi-agency audit to assure itself of how well agencies were working together to safeguard children and young people who experience DV&A. The areas of enquiry included the following:

- Impact of Early Help
- Quality of Assessment
- Quality of Interventions
- Quality of Planning
- Management Oversight

Who was involved in the audit?

Altogether, 10 auditors representing the LSCB Monitoring & Evaluation Sub Committee and agencies from across the Partnership completed audits on six cases. Auditors were invited to a ½ day event to share their audit findings and to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the work undertaken with children/young people & families. The lead officer for the audit was Richard Hakin, Head of Service Child in Need, Brighton & Hove City Council, with support from the LSCB's Quality Assurance Manager, Tina James.

Overall Strengths

- There is an **effective multi agency** response to the risk to children from DV&A.
- All agencies are **systematic** in making relevant checks and referrals to other agencies when safeguarding concerns are identified.
- Sussex **Police** met their safeguarding responsibilities in all cases.
- Where **disclosures** about DV&A are made, the management of this is good and appropriate action is taken by the services working with the family.
- On the whole, **information sharing** and communication between agencies is timely and effective.
- Where referrals are made to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), these are made on **professional judgement**, which determined that the risks in the case were greater than those indicated using the CAADA-DASH risk identification checklist.
- There is evidence that the **voice of the child** or young person has informed interventions carried out by Children's Social Work with the family and that children remain the focus of the Child Protection Plan in terms of both their safety and emotional needs.

Recommendations

The areas in need of improvement were considered by the audit group and a number of recommendations were made:



Consideration to be given to the use of the CAADA (Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse) DASH-RIC (**Domestic Abuse Stalking Harassment Risk Indicator Checklist**) including:

- Training available to support staff to complete this
- How it is embedded in routine practice
- How it supports a risk assessment to reflect risks both to adults and children



Children's Social Work to improve the completion of the **MARAC referral** form in particular the following:

- Include the history of DV&A
- Include information about the current risks & needs of the family



Greater clarity on the roll out of the new **Single Combined Assessment of Risk Form (SCARF)**. The SCARF will help to streamline the approach to DV&A made by numerous agencies.



MARAC to **review links** to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Early Help pathways to ensure that children's needs are addressed.



Improve **information sharing** between Children's Social Work and Brighton & Sussex University Hospitals Trust (BSUH) where children are open to Social Work due to DV&A or the child is subject to Child Protection Plan.



Children's Social Work to review the use of **Written Agreements (WA's)** in DV&A cases (especially the use of WA's to close DV&A cases).



Ensure that in cases where School Nursing or Health Visiting are providing a targeted service, there is an **outcome focussed** action plan on file.



Improve the pathway for referrals from Social Work to the domestic abuse charity, **RISE**, clarifying the purpose and expectations of referrals, and ensuring workers receive training around **third party referrals**.



Introduce a DV&A **alert flagging system** for both the children & adult records held by GPs.



Consider whether a 'toxic trio' assessment report be developed for use in cases where there are **multiple complex issues** of DV&A/Mental Health/Substance Misuse (Both Early Help & Children's Social Work)

What Next?

A DV&A Action Group will meet to take forward the actions from this multi agency audit. An update from the DV&A Action Group will feature in a future edition of the LSCB Safeguarding Newsletter. You can sign up to receive this on our website www.brightonandhovelscb.org.uk

Feedback

As staff and frontline managers you will know about the quality and impact of your own services, and those of the partner agencies you work with. The LSCB Quality Assurance Framework highlights that it is important to the LSCB to have a constant feedback loop from the frontline to keep senior management and those with governance responsibilities 'reality-based'; not just in terms of what is or is not working, but to assist with ideas for improvement so that changes can be made systematically.

We would like to hear your thoughts, feedback and comments on findings presented to you in this briefing and any feedback on the style of the briefing itself, please do contact us at LSCB@Brighton-Hove.gov.uk to ensure your voice is heard.

The statutory functions of the LSCB include to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of what is done by partners individually and collectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and advise them on ways to improve. This includes quality assuring practice, for example through joint audits of case files involving practitioners and identifying lessons to be learned. This briefing is in line with our **Learning & Improvement Framework**.