



Learning Together: Staff Briefing (February 2019)

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

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is characterised by controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour encompassing but not limited to psychological, physical, sexual and economic abuse within an intimate or family relationship (Home Office, 2013). It is the most common factor in situations where children are at risk of serious harm in England. It can have a detrimental and long-lasting impact on a child's health, development, ability to learn and well-being.

Safeguarding children exposed to domestic abuse is one of the priorities for the LSCB. This is due to the risks posed to children living with domestic abuse and its prevalence. For children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) domestic abuse is the most frequently recorded factor. As at 13th Nov 2018, domestic abuse has been flagged in 64% of cases subject to a child protection plan in Brighton and Hove.

Purpose of the Audit

The LSCB Leadership Group agreed to the proposal made by the Monitoring & Evaluation Sub Committee for the theme of the Q2¹ 2018-19 multi-agency audit to be a re-audit of domestic abuse.

The purpose of the audit was to examine the effectiveness of responses to children (and their families) where concerns have been reported in respect of domestic abuse including:

- Concerns are clearly recognised and addressed early enough
- Assessments, planning and interventions are of a good standard, have used the relevant tools and place the safety of the child at the centre
- There is evidence of a whole family approach
- Agencies are working together effectively to protect the child
- There is effective management oversight

¹ The audit was completed in Q3 due to the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children Services (ILACS) taking place in July 2018.

This short briefing is aimed at professionals who work with children and families in Brighton & Hove. It presents the key findings and recommendations from a recent multi agency audit on **Domestic Abuse**. A full report is also available for professionals working in partner agencies in Brighton & Hove upon request. If you would like a copy of this report please contact us at LSCB@Brighton-hove.gov.uk

Methodology

Seven cases were selected for audit which covered a range of ages and levels of need:

- 1 case open to the Integrated Team for Families (ITF)
- 2 cases where the child was assessed as a Child in Need due to domestic abuse
- 1 case where the child was subject to a Child Protection due to domestic abuse
- 2 cases where the child was subject to a CP Plan for the 2nd /subsequent time.
- 1 Child in Care

Audits were completed by 13 agencies that have provided a service to the child and their family. Agencies were invited to discuss their findings at a multi-agency meeting and explore why standards were graded in a particular way. In addition, the auditors were asked to consider the both the strengths and difficulties in practice and to identify gaps in service provision.

The lead officers for the audit were:

- Anna Gianfrancesco, Head of Performance & Safeguarding, BHCC
- Chrissy Bulling, Lead Practitioner, Children's Social Work Services, BHCC

Supported by Tina James, Quality Assurance Manager, Brighton and Hove City Council.

Overall Judgements

The final judgements for the cases rated the audits as 'Good' (3) and Requires Improvement (4). No cases were judged to be inadequate and in all cases the child was safe.

What is working well?



The identification of need is clearly recognised and the referral is timely for the child/young person in all but one case.



In all but one case, the response to the referral has been appropriate and timely.



A review of the medical records in GP Practices (undertaken as part of the audit) found that in all but one case the children were coded as 'child cause for safeguarding concern'. In the one case where this had not happened, a new system has been set up in the Practice and it has since been rectified.



All of the assessments are up to date and current. In all cases domestic abuse is considered as part of the assessment and in the majority of cases this is thorough. Relevant agencies are consulted in the assessment including specialist services in all case



In two cases where a parent is known to Probation Services, the risks around domestic abuse and future risks are identified and there has been proactive management of risks. In both cases, OASys (Offender Assessment System) assessments have been completed and these are judged to be of a good standard.



In most cases there is evidence of a whole family approach. Good practice is noted in case A where the plan considers all family members including the child's father who is not the perpetrator of domestic abuse.



In most cases there is a clear multi-agency plan which is working towards addressing the risks and increasing the strength factors.

The family have been supported through the plan to address a number of issues including education, health and housing. The TAF reviews have mother's comments in the minutes.



Overall, MARAC was found to be effective in supporting good information sharing and identification of risks for children. In most cases agencies report that MARAC information about actions and decisions is shared appropriately.

What do we need to improve?



In some cases the child's plan requires improvement including in one case where the interventions recorded in the plan are not discussed at review meetings; in another case the plan is too task orientated and another where the plan is built around the surveillance of the mother rather than taking a therapeutic approach.



In cases where a Safety Plan is required this is not in place in four out of six cases – in two cases a Written Agreement has been used which does not follow BHCC procedures (Update: in one of these cases, a Safety Plan has since been produced).



Management oversight requires improvement in four cases:

- In case B which has been opened and closed to social work over the last 9 months and where information was not clarified by the services involved in the case leading to some confusion. Also, in this case the Police risk assessment and investigation was not reviewed by the supervisor.
- In case C the needs of the children need to be more clearly discussed in supervision
- In case D there is no recording of formal supervision and conversations in the School Nursing and Health Visiting files.
- In case E, supervision (social work) has not taken place within the required timeframe and the most recent supervision records are blank



In 5 cases, the male perpetrator was referred to the Living Without Violence Programme (now called 'Chance to Change') however the programme was not completed by any of the clients. Update: The Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator (Chance to Change) is working with Social Work to ensure that social workers support the client through the programme using a case management approach.

What Next?

The final report has been approved by the LSCB Monitoring & Evaluation Subcommittee on 29th November 2018 and the members will oversee the action plan. Recommendations include:

- ! All professionals to be aware that where there are multiple complexities aside domestic abuse, equal attention should be given to these issues to avoid them being lost in the planning and decision making.
- ! All professionals to fully consider the ethnicity and identity of children and evaluate the impact of ethnicity, cultural norms, religion and transgenerational abuse when working with families who experience domestic abuse.
- ! Improve the quality of chronologies and recognise the effectiveness of chronologies in identifying patterns of abusive, coercive and controlling behaviour and understanding the child's lived experience.
- ! Managers to use the Child Protection Liaison and Safeguarding Group (CPLG)² to discuss cases proactively rather than wait until things have gone wrong.
- ! Improve our understanding of how domestic abuse impacts on the child's behaviour and emotional distress and consider how interventions could be used differently to achieve earlier and positive outcomes for the child.
- ! In Brighton & Hove there is a range of training that staff can access to develop their understanding of domestic abuse. This includes LSCB, VAWG and single agency training. Workers should be encouraged to engage in such training particularly to develop their understanding of the lived experience of children, coercive control and adopting a whole family approach to practice.

Further Reading & Useful Links

- Guidance for joint targeted area inspections (JTAs) of the multi-agency response to children living with domestic abuse, and links to the inspection reports:
[Joint Inspections of the response to children living with domestic abuse](#)
- [Responding to Domestic Abuse: A Resource for Health Professionals](#)
- Government Guidance and Regulation [Violence Against Women and Girls](#)

If you are concerned about a child in Brighton & Hove contact the **Front Door for Families** on **01273 290400**

You can also complete their [online referral form](#) or email FrontDoorForFamilies@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk

LSCB Multi Agency Training:

The LSCB offers a course on [Domestic Violence & Abuse: The Impact on Children & Young People](#) and the next two sessions take place on **Tuesday 5th March 2019 and Thursday 2nd May 2019**. This training will help you to develop an understanding of the issues faced by families in this situation, the impact of this kind of abuse, and will also signpost you to local multi-agency support available to intervene and thus reduce the risk to those impacted.

Book through the Learning Gateway [here](#) or visit the LSCB Website for more information: www.brightonandhovelscb.org.uk/events

Feedback

We would like to hear your thoughts, feedback & comments on findings presented to you in this briefing and any feedback on the style of the briefing itself.

Please contact us at LSCB@Brighton-Hove.gov.uk to ensure your voice is heard.

² The Child Protection Liaison and Safeguarding Group (CPLG) is a multi-agency forum that meets on a monthly basis. Its main aim is to review and improve joint working practice in respect of inter-agency Child Protection processes, including analysis of examples of operational practice within the context of Child Protection enquiries and investigations.

