

1

Background

Child C was looked after from birth, made subject of a Care Order and placed with parents subject to Placement with Parent regulations.

Eight months later the family moved to another Local Authority area for a period of six months. During this period a second child was born and became subject to a Child in Need plan.

Although it was intended to seek revocation of the Care Order, the plan became no longer viable when concerns about the standard of care to the children escalated, and the partnership with the adults in the family deteriorated.

Intensive efforts were made to support the family, however, the sibling child was made the subject of a Child Protection Plan for neglect. This plan did not apply to Child C because he was the subject of a Care Order.

The relationship between the parents and the Local Authority deteriorated to the point where the social worker for the children was refused access to the children's home over a period of three weeks. Ultimately the police were asked to provide assistance to complete a welfare check whereupon the children were found to be living in squalid conditions. Both children were then placed in foster care.

7

Implementing Change

Reflect on the similar features presented in this case, that are common with many others. Consider how the findings can support your critical thinking and how the actions can help remove common pitfalls of practice.

- Reflect on issues raised in this case with others on the case load.
- Develop critical thinking on each case
- Understand and avoid common pitfalls during their management of each case

2

Safeguarding Concern and Incident

Child C was at risk of significant harm whilst the Local Authority held Parental Responsibility

Both parents were vulnerable by virtue of having been formerly looked after and having limited personal support networks

The children were subject to parallel planning processes, looked after and child in need, which were managed without the necessary connectivity

The deteriorating home conditions and changes in parental engagement were not challenged in a timely manner which led to the children's continued exposure to significant harm

The plan for the children focussed too greatly on the problems of the adults without sufficient focus on the child's voice or lived experience

3

Findings

Assessments of family functioning and parenting capacity need to be evidenced and updated as family dynamics and circumstances change, at all times with a focus on the child's lived experience.

All regulated placements need a review process which informs responsible individuals of key changes. Placement with parent regulations should be specifically reviewed annually or more frequently in the event of any significant change in circumstances.

Without the use of evidenced based assessment tools, there is high likelihood that identification of neglect will drift and cause children ongoing harm.

4

Findings Cont..

Faithful adherence to the guidance of the IRO handbook, including direct contact with the child, is critical to upholding the welfare of the child as paramount.

All professionals should ensure their work is focussed on the lived experience of the child, and that children's plans make clear how a successful outcome will be experienced by the child.

Ensuring a consistent user focussed experience should be a guiding principle in the delivery of services to children and families, in particular, when children of the same family are subject to different thresholds of intervention.

When professionals experience personal fear or threat, this should raise concerns about the safety of the child/children and adults in the household.

5

Learning for Action

The Placement with Parent procedure should be refreshed to build in the expectation that significant changes in circumstances should be shared with the nominated responsible officer.

Each LAC (Looked After Child) review should explicitly consider the continued suitability of Placement with Parent regulations and undertake exception reporting to the nominated responsible officer.

The IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer) must formally challenge care planning where needed irrespective of the operational pressures at play.

6

Learning for Action

The investigation of neglect needs to adhere to the local neglect pathway in order to secure evidence based assessment and safe outcomes in a timely manner.

Parallel processes of support being offered should liaise with each other to ensure all aspects of care and risk are understood and actioned.

The plan should ensure the child's voice, whatever age is heard through a range ensure of mechanisms, and that their lived experience is clearly considered through the threshold application.

The checklist contained in 'Working with Uncooperative/Resistant Families' should be used routinely in supervision when facing difficulty in working with a family.



Child C 7 Minute Briefing

Additional Information

Visit: <https://safeguardingchildren.salford.gov.uk/>
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