

Salford Safeguarding Children Partnership

Child Safeguarding Practice Review Helen

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Relevant Abbreviations

ABEN	A 'Bed Every Night' Scheme
BRP	Biometric Residence Permit
CAFA	Child and Family Assessment
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CSC	Children's Social Care
CSPR	Child Safeguarding Practice Review
DfE	Department for Education
GMP	Greater Manchester Police
PPP	Police Powers of Protection
PRSG	Practice Review Subgroup
RPE	Reflective Practitioner Event
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic and Time-Based
SSAB	Salford Safeguarding Adult Board
SSCB	Salford Safeguarding Children Board
SSCP	Salford Safeguarding Children Partnership
SSP	Salford Safeguarding Partnership
UFF	Uniform Format Form
UK	United Kingdom
UKVI	UK Visas and Immigration
VAC	Visa Application Centre

1. The reason for the Child Safeguarding Practice Review:

- 1.1. Delay in potential trafficking of a child being effectively addressed.

For the purpose of this review the child will be referred to as Helen.

- 1.2. A referral to Salford's Safeguarding Children Partnership was made by the safeguarding lead for housing. Concern was raised through the Housing Options team regarding a delayed response to a potential concern of trafficking. Housing Options are the team within the City Council who carry out homeless assessments and manage temporary accommodation.
- 1.3. An adult male, Aaron presented at Housing Options on the 29th May 2019, requesting to make a homeless application for himself and Helen (who was presented as Aaron's wife) whom had recently joined him in the UK from Africa. This was the third time that they had presented requesting accommodation, having been initially referred to the night shelter a week prior to this but had chosen not to utilise the service. On this occasion the staff member of the Housing Options team who was completing the homelessness assessment immediately had concerns regarding the age of Helen and the validity of the identification documents being presented, which claimed that she was 24 years old. Based on the appearance, stature and behaviour of Helen, the professional believed a more realistic estimate of age was that she was a 12 year old child.
- 1.4. The concerns were immediately raised internally within Housing Options organisation and then with Children's Social Care (CSC), Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Immigration and with a Modern Day Slavery helpline. GMP visited Helen however no further action was taken as Helen had identification documentation supporting the fact that she was 24 years old. This resulted in the Housing Options team referring the couple to the 'A Bed Every Night Scheme' (ABEN) under Supported Tenancies who placed the couple in the night shelter (which is an adult only provision). This was deemed to be the most appropriate accommodation, in the context of professional concerns, due to the fact that staff were in place 24 hours a day and the regulations, layout and sleeping arrangements within the shelter (dormitory style), meant they had separate beds and sharing a bed was prohibited.
- 1.5. Helen was removed under Police Powers of Protection (PPP) on 21st June 2019 and placed into foster care. Aaron was arrested for trafficking offences. An age assessment commenced and completed on 5th July 2019 resulting in an approximate age being assigned to Helen of between 12 and 15 years.
- 1.6. X-ray tests were undertaken on the 6th August 2019 using the Greulich and Pyle method of assessing bone age, indicating that Helen was chronologically aged 12 years and 6 months.

2. The decision to complete a Child Safeguarding Practice Review

- 2.1. The case was referred to the SSCP Practice Review Subgroup on the 17th July 2019 by the safeguarding lead in housing due to concerns about the way agencies had worked together to address the concern that Helen was a child and a concern that Helen had potentially been harmed. The criteria and threshold had been met to hold a Rapid Review.
- 2.2. Salford Children's Social Care Services notified the National Panel in line with expected practice on 23rd July 2019.
- 2.3. The Rapid Review took place on 12th August 2019, within the expected timescales of 15 working days. The outcome was that the criteria for a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review had been met proportionate to the scale and issues of concern being raised locally and for national consideration.

3. Rapid Review Panel Membership:

Safeguarding Team	Manchester Foundation Trust
Detective Sergeant	GMP Serious Case Review Team
Service Manager	Housing Options
Director	Manchester City Mission
Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children and Looked after Children (Chair)	NHS Salford Clinical Commissioning Group
Legal Adviser	Salford & Manchester Legal Service
Head of Safeguarding (Co-chair)	Salford City Council: People
Head of Integrated Social Work	Salford City Council: People
Head of Social Work Improvement	Salford City Council: People
Social Worker	Salford City Council: People
Practice Manager: Looked After Children Team	Salford City Council: People
Head of Regulatory Services	Salford City Council: Place

Supporting People Safeguarding Lead	Salford Community, Health and Social Care
Named Nurse: Safeguarding & Looked After Children	Salford Royal Foundation Trust (SRFT)
Business Manager	SSCP
Senior Business Support Officer (Minutes)	SSCP
Principal Officer	Supported Tenancies
Visas & Citizenship Director's Office	UK Visas & Immigration

- 3.1. The National Panel advised that this be a Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR), agreeing with the proposed methodology of a Reflective Practitioner Event (RPE) to finalise the learning.

4. Governance Arrangements

- 4.1. The conduct of the CSPR was overseen by the rapid review panel and the SSCP practice review sub-group. The final draft was shared with practitioners who attended the RPE for a factual accuracy check.
- 4.2. The final report was signed off by the SSCP on 23rd March 2020.

5. Family Participation and Equality and Diversity Considerations

- 5.1. We now know that Aaron is a direct relative to Helen and that he had initially planned to bring his wife over to the UK and then changed the plan to bring Helen, his family member to the UK. He used some of the documentation from his wife's identification to support the family reunion application.
- 5.2. Helen has shared some of her experience regarding the time period of this review. Helen says that she was woken up by the police (on the 21st June) and Aaron was not present at the accommodation. He had at this point been arrested and removed by the police. He was the only individual she had known in the UK and when he had disappeared, she was upset. Helen shared that she did not understand why she had been taken to the police station. Helen remembered that she was provided with an interpreter; however she was unable to recall if she understood what was being said to her, this possibly related to the emotions she was feeling at the time. When asked, Helen said that she felt no-one listened to her throughout the process of the police protection powers being exercised.

6. The methodology

- 6.1. Due to the length of time Helen had been in the UK, only housing agencies and GMP had direct contact with her before being placed in emergency foster care, so the timeline for the review was from 29th May 2019 until the 21st June 2019.
- 6.2. SMART actions to address the immediate learning had been developed by the Rapid Review panel but to support the review and understand the decision making around the needs of the child, the Rapid Review panel ascertained that the RPE would be integral to the learning. The purpose of the RPE was to gather the views and experiences of the practitioners directly involved with family during the time period under review. It provided an opportunity for frontline practitioners to:-
- Contribute their perspectives without fear of being blamed for actions they took in good faith
 - Understand precisely who did what and the underlying reasons
 - Understand practice from the viewpoint of the individuals and organisations involved at the time
- 6.3. Salford Safeguarding Children Partnership's Case Discussion Tool was utilised to facilitate the RPE as a holistic and collaborative approach of reviewing cases. The scope of which looks beyond the specific detail of any case but attempts to identify and understand underlying issues that influence front line practitioners. It is an asset based model with a focus on systemic strengths and weaknesses. Understanding these is at the heart of driving change, culture and wider practice to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. It helped identify key periods of time within this review that were significant and allowed the story of Helen to unfold and helped the reviewers to explore the key lines of enquiry.

7. Key Lines of Enquiry

- 7.1. The Rapid Review panel identified key issues that needed to be explored within the RPE which generated some key lines of enquiry

Key lines of enquiry	
KLOE 1	Explore the lived experience of Helen to consider if significant harm has been caused.
KLOE 2	Explore the family context of Helen, her previous familial life and her journey from Africa into the UK.
KLOE 3	What impacted the delay in Helen being formally assessed to be a child?

KLOE 4	Did agencies recognise that this was a child whom had potentially been trafficked into the UK?
KLOE 5	Are the pathways for managing cases of children and adults who have been potentially trafficked in place, transparent and embedded into local practice?
KLOE 6	Understand why professional escalation was not fully utilised.
KLOE 7	To ascertain whether the local actions arising from the joint case review (Child/Adult 15) were implemented and embedded across agencies.

7.2. A previous case review jointly commissioned by Salford Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) and Salford Adult Safeguarding Board (SASB)¹ in 2015 “Trafficking of Child/Adult 15 for Domestic Servitude and Sexual Exploitation” identified similar issues in relation to Helen. This included challenges with biometrics, lack of access to appropriate interpreters and relying on valid documentation which was not issued based on evidence of the persons date of birth. Therefore, as part of this review the learning from Child/Adult 15 was revisited to understand how that learning impacted practice for Helen.

8. Practitioner Participation

8.1. The following practitioners and managers attended the RPE:

Organisation	Role
Greater Manchester Police	Police Sergeant
Greater Manchester Police	Police Constable
Housing	Principal Officer
Housing	Team Leader
Housing (Supported Tenancies)	Principal Officer
Housing (Supported Tenancies)	Supported Tenancies Officer
Night shelter	Shelter Chaplain
Salford City Council: People (Children’s Services)	Independent Review Officer

¹ <https://safeguardingadults.salford.gov.uk/media/1120/child-adult-15.pdf>

Salford City Council: People (Children's Services)	Advanced Social Worker
Salford City Council: People (Children's Services)	Practice Manager
UK Visas & Immigration	Visa & Citizenship Director's Office

9. The reviewers

- 9.1. **Emma Ford:** Emma is the Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance within Salford Council. Emma is a qualified social worker and holds a Masters of Science in Advanced Practice in Forensic Mental Health. Emma has over 22 years of experience working with children, young people and families, with 13 years experience within the Child Protection area of practice. Emma's roles have included managing youth services, social workers and managers. Her most current role is focused on practice improvement, and she chairs the multi agency partnership practice review sub group for Salford's Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- 9.2. **Nicola Dugdale:** Nicola is the Deputy Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children and Looked After Children within NHS Salford CCG. Nicola is a qualified Registered Mental Health Nurse and is currently undertaking a Masters of Science in Safeguarding in an International Context. Nicola has worked in the field of adult mental health from 2004 and in the arena of safeguarding children since 2014. Her most current role is focussed on supporting the Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children and Looked After Children in the provision of clinical leadership and expertise in safeguarding to drive quality across the commissioning environment and within provider health services.

10. The story of Helen

- 10.1. Helen initially arrived in the UK and stated that her maternal family lived in Africa. There have been several disclosures of new information regarding Helen's family composition since the review has commenced.
- 10.2. In October 2019 Helen informed her social worker that Aaron is a family member and not her husband. Aaron has since shared that he had previously been married and his wife was due to travel to the UK, however they had an argument which resulted in them separating. Helen did not wish to remain in Africa and therefore Aaron used his wife's visa and documents to transport Helen to the UK.
- 10.3. The police investigation in relation to the trafficking offences concluded on result of the evidence that Aaron is a family member and no evidence of exploitation is evidenced. The Home Office have been updated with regards to whether there will be a criminal investigation into Aaron assisting illegal entry into the UK. The Home Office (Immigration and Enforcement unit) have confirmed they will not be pursuing a

criminal investigation or prosecution into any immigration related offences and will be dealing with it on an administrative level.

11. Background to the entry of Helen into the UK

11.1. Aaron claimed asylum in the UK in 2015. An asylum application would have been made which included the rationale for seeking asylum and relevant family history including his spouse. UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) would be responsible for reviewing the request and making a decision as to whether the criteria had been met.

11.2. Under the Family Reunion process a spouse, partner or child under the age of 18 of those granted humanitarian protection in the UK, can reunite with family members in the UK. This is providing they formed part of the family unit before their sponsor fled the country of origin (in this case Aaron). Anyone who has claimed asylum successfully can apply for family members to join them as long as they can adequately prove that they are related as claimed².

11.3. In order to join family members under this process, in these circumstances individuals do not always have to have a passport. By the very nature of their lived experience, refugees often have left their country of origin or habitual residence with no identification. An informed decision is therefore made on whether they should be allowed to travel based on the information available. A visa or entry clearance would allow the travel to take place and a Uniform Format Form (UFF) would also be issued. Guidance from UK Visas and Immigration³ indicates that the UFF has replaced the previous Declaration of Identity form and unlike this previous form, the UFF “does not confer nationality and neither does it confirm identity”.

11.4. Therefore the identification is not based on evidence of the person’s actual identity. It is formed and issued based on the information provided by the applicant and their sponsor.

LEARNING POINT: Home Office ID for refugees and their family members is not always evidence based. Practitioners to be aware of this and to exercise appropriate professional curiosity into the age and developmental stage of a presenting person.

²https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/856915/family-reunion-guidance-v4.0-ext.pdf

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-are-acceptable-travel-documents-for-entry-clearance-ecb08/ecb08-what-are-acceptable-travel-documents-for-entry-clearance>

February 2019

- 11.5. Helen or a third party will have made an online application and provided all relevant personal and familial details. Helen attended a Visa Application Centre (VAC) situated in Africa where she was residing as a refugee, to provide biometrics which included fingerprints and facial images. The information provided as part of the application indicated that Helen and Aaron met in 2013 and last saw each other in 2014. Aaron had entered the UK in 2015. It is not known who completed this application, whether it was Helen or a person on her behalf.
- 11.6. The VAC is operated by a commercial partner trained to undertake administrative functions of processing visa applications. All documentation is forwarded to the decision-making centre. In this case it would have been sent to UKVI Pretoria, South Africa. They consider all information and supporting documents and ensure it aligns with the statement of evidence provided by the sponsor at the point they claimed asylum. In this case, Aaron had provided details of his spouse in 2015 when he originally claimed asylum. Helen as part of her supporting evidence under the Family Reunion Process had provided evidence including wedding photographs, a marriage certificate, and evidence of a pre-flight relationship before Aaron entered the UK and evidence of ongoing communication and money transfers since then.
- 11.7. Once the successful application was made a short validity vignette would have been issued to Helen which allows entry into the UK and is valid for 30 days from issue. This vignette allows collection of a biometric residence permit (BRP) within 10 working days of entry into the UK which includes biographic details and biometric information such as facial image and fingerprints⁴.

20th May 2019

- 11.8. Housing Options received notification from Aaron that Helen would be joining him from Africa. It was understood this would be under the Family Reunion process.
- 11.9. Helen would have had no contact with any civil servant or any government official until she boarded a flight in May 2019, after leaving the refugee camp, when she would have passed through border control and come into contact with airline staff. During transit in Brussels Helen would mainly have been in contact with airline staff. Her first contact with any official government staff from within the UK would have been on arriving on her flight and reaching Birmingham.

⁴https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/533854/BRP_OA_information_leaflet_-_July_2016.pdf

- 11.10. Considering the chronological age of Helen, it is suspected strongly that she would have travelled with someone during this journey. This is evidenced by the fact that two airline tickets were purchased at the same time and sent to a 'WhatsApp' account of Helen. Helen has denied travelling with anyone. If Helen had not been alone this may have reduced the professional curiosity of airline staff than if a young girl who appeared to be aged 12 was travelling alone.

23rd May 2019

- 11.11. Aaron and Helen presented as homeless and they were referred to the night shelter under the ABEN scheme under Supported Tenancies. The couple did not stay at the shelter.

24th May 2019

- 11.12. Aaron and Helen presented again as homeless stating they couldn't stay at the night shelter due to men being there. Advised this was the only accommodation available under the ABEN scheme. The couple did not remain.

12. Practice Review Chronology

29th May 2019

- 12.1. Aaron and Helen presented at housing options as homeless and asked for accommodation. Safeguarding concerns were raised by the professional undertaking their homeless assessment. This practitioner was of the view that Helen was a child.
- 12.2. The housing practitioner raised the concerns internally to her safeguarding lead. A telephone call to The Bridge (Salford's front door service if worried about a child), was made to seek advice. The advice provided was to speak to Helen alone to ascertain her views, wishes and feelings and to contact the police for advice and to feedback the outcome back to the Bridge. A formal written/online referral was not made under the auspice of 'Worried about a Child' at this point as it was an advice call only.
- 12.3. The housing practitioner made attempts to contact the police via 101 but the practitioner was unable to speak to anyone as no one answered the phone. This resulted in the practitioner subsequently attending the local police station requesting support. It was noted within the reflective practitioner's event that the housing officer was tenacious in her action to ensure the police were aware of her concerns that Helen was a child.
- 12.4. Parallel to the housing practitioner making contact with The Bridge and police, a referral was made for Aaron and Helen under the ABEN scheme under Supported Tenancies. The safeguarding concerns were discussed and shared openly so the viewpoints and concerns of the agencies were known and understood and further

monitoring and observations of Aaron and Helen's relationship and interactions could take place. A decision was made to place Aaron and Helen in the night shelter.

12.5. Practitioners from Supported Tenancies on meeting Helen had the same concerns regarding her age and raised the concerns internally within their organisation, as they believed her to be a child. As Housing Options were linking in with the Bridge and GMP, supported tenancies contacted a Modern Slavery helpline following recent training they had attended. They were advised that this was a matter for Police and Immigration services. Contact with Immigration services was attempted but unsuccessful as the call was unanswered. Senior staff within Supported Tenancies attempted to liaise with individual officers in GMP as they had contacts within this part of the organisation. Although direct contact with specific individuals was not successful, contact with GMP did take place and an incident log was created. The concerns were recognised and officers were dispatched. Attempts were also made to discuss the safeguarding concerns internally with the housing services organisational Safeguarding Lead but she was not available.

12.6. Officers from GMP attended Housing Options the afternoon of 29th May 2019 and spoke to Aaron and Helen separately. Initially concerns had been raised that an interpreter had not been used to speak with Helen. It was clarified within the RPE that attempts were made to speak to Helen via the use of telephone interpreter services however at the time of the call; an exact dialect could not be matched. Therefore an interpreter was provided but did not fully meet the language and communication needs of Helen. GMP officers liaised with Immigration services that confirmed the details of Helen and sent photographic evidence from biometrics provided at the VAC. There were distinctive marks within the photograph that matched the facial marks of Helen. The Bridge were updated by Supported Tenancies and no further action taken as they had been reassured that GMP had followed up the matter and confirmed that Helen's identification confirmed that she was the person on the identification card, and therefore an adult.

30th May 2019

12.7. A practitioner from the night shelter contacted Supported Tenancies expressing the same concern regarding the age of Helen as they believed her to be a child. Their concerns were acknowledged and advised that safeguarding issues were being raised with the police and children's social care but the rationale for placing there was for ongoing monitoring of the situation in the interim period.

2nd and 3rd June 2019

12.8. Concerns were raised internally within the night shelter about the age of Helen to both senior staff and then to their Safeguarding Lead. Liaison was then made with the Principle Officer at Supported Tenancies. It was confirmed that the concerns were shared and they had already contacted their Safeguarding leads, Children's Social Care

and the Police. This issue had been investigated and no evidence could be found to prove the identification was not genuine.

3rd June 2019

12.9. Staff at the night shelter were concerned that there was tension between other residents regarding the age of Helen. Further concerns related to Aaron not allowing Helen to shower. It is also noted that Helen was going out throughout the day with 4 or 5 other people, not known to the housing service or provider.

5th June 2019

12.10. Practitioners from the night shelter informed Supported Tenancies that they had other concerns that Helen was being taken out by Aaron and 3 other men in a car and when asked on where they were going the reply was to "the shipping place". An update of the actions being taken by Supported Tenancies was provided with advice that the police should be contacted if there was a suspicion that Helen was in potential danger.

12.11. Supported Tenancies raised their concerns with their Safeguarding Lead in Housing on the 5th June 2019. The Safeguarding Lead subsequently made attempts to contact practitioners within the Complex Safeguarding Hub; however they could not get hold of the person they were attempting to contact. They therefore made further contact by Supported Tenancies, on 5th June via email, to the Trafficking and Slavery GM Co-ordination Unit to share their concerns.

6th June 2019

12.12. On receipt of the email an officer within the Unit reviewed the case. The officer was aware that response officers from GMP had previously attended and spoken to Helen on the 29th May 2019. Due to this there were no immediate safeguarding concerns highlighted and it was agreed he would recheck with Immigration services the validity of the immigration card for Helen.

12.13. On the 6th June 2019 another practitioner from the night shelter raised concerns with the charity Hope for Justice and again with Supported Tenancies. He was advised that the case continued to be reviewed and Helen was deemed to be in the safest place as she could be monitored. This notion was contended by the practitioner based on the information that Helen was being taken out daily with unknown males. The practitioner was advised that if they had concerns they should contact GMP, which they subsequently did.

12.14. Two officers from GMP attended the night shelter on 6th June 2019 in response to the concerns raised. Helen was spoken to alone via an interpreter service. She confirmed her name and date of birth and provided a UK visa issued in the UK. She stated that she married Aaron in Africa and had relocated to the UK to be with him. She reported

to be acting freely, was happy in the relationship and had no concerns she wished to report to GMP. Immigration services were contacted, and the identification was confirmed, including that both Aaron and Helen were in the UK legally and as biometrics had been undertaken including photo identification there was confidence that the age was correct. As this was the second query being raised by GMP, Immigration services agreed to forward the case to their local Immigration Safeguarding team to make further inquiries into the case. At the RPE it was reported that on this occasion, GMP agreed that Helen looked like a child but were assured that the identification was genuine.

11th June 2019

- 12.15. A copy of the Immigration card for Helen was forwarded to the officer in GMP Modern Day Slavery Co-ordination Unit and 2 days later Immigration services confirmed that there was no passport on Immigration systems and Helen was a refugee.

18th June 2019

- 12.16. The Safeguarding Lead for Housing attended a local multi agency subgroup which is responsible for developing responsiveness and outcomes in relation to complex safeguarding issues. The senior GMP officer present at this meeting was updated, opportunistically, regarding the concerns from Housing agencies that Helen was not an adult. The senior GMP officer requested that the information about the concerns be sent over and upon doing so, confirmed that it would be picked up and investigated by the Complex Safeguarding Hub. It was allocated the same day and the complex safeguarding hub undertook further investigations into the validity of Helen's ID.

21st June 2019

- 12.17. A referral was made by GMP to The Bridge who requested an age assessment of Helen. A referral was subsequently made to Salford Complex Safeguarding Hub and a Section 47 strategy meeting was convened. Helen was made subject to Police Powers of Protection (PPP) and placed into emergency foster care on 21st June 2019. At the RPE reflection took place to consider why the age assessment progressed at this stage, following the referral to the bridge from GMP. It was agreed that as the PPP had been taken, this triggers an automatic response for a section 47 to take place. It was also evident at this point that the ID for Helen was not informed by genuine documents relating to her age.
- 12.18. The age assessment was conducted and concluded that Helen was approximately 12 years and 6 months of age.

13. GMP investigation update:

- 13.1. GMP commenced an investigation as a result of Helen being taken into police protection when they attended a homeless shelter due to concerns of human trafficking.
- 13.2. The concerns related to a female who presented as a child, however reported to be in her early twenties and married to the male adult that accompanied her in the shelter. She was placed in foster care where she has remained since. Aaron was arrested and bailed for human trafficking offences.
- 13.3. Since this time, GMP have liaised with a number of agencies. Helen has recently stated that she is a family member of Aaron, she came to the UK as his wife so that this would fit the criteria of a 'family reunion' for immigration purposes. DNA analysis has confirmed the biological relationship. Considering this, immigration have been updated. There will be no further police action in relation to the trafficking offence.

14. Key Lines Of Enquiry

KLO 1

Explore the lived experience of Helen to consider if significant harm has been caused.

- 14.1. It is now known that Aaron is related to Helen by blood. There is no evidence that Helen has experienced significant harm as a result of the direct care given from Aaron or during the time period that professionals raised concern that she was potentially a child. The lived experience of Helen from birth is not fully known, it is likely she has experienced a number of life events and transitions that would not be experienced by the average child within the UK. The extent of the impact of these events are not yet fully known and Helen is being appropriately supported.

KLO 2

Explore the family context of Helen, her previous familial life and her journey from Africa into the UK.

- 14.2. Children and young people who have endured the experience of leaving their home, community and family via the process of asylum will experience challenge as they journey and transition into a new country to seek safety and protection. These journeys can be difficult and can last days or up to years. Often, they will have little or no familial or social contacts or support. There is a myriad of sociocultural reasons for leaving their country of origin but have been associated with conflict, war and human rights abuses and they are seeking safety and protection in the UK via asylum. Some children and young people will have experienced bereavements or may be separated from family members such as their parents. They may be affected by significant trauma, by their experiences in refugee camps or through the journey to the UK

where they are furthermore at significant risk of being trafficked or exploited due to their vulnerability and isolation. These circumstances can be exacerbated on reaching the UK through issues relating to for example, asylum, poverty, housing, cultural and language barriers and even racism. All of which can impact on integration⁵.

- 14.3. It was therefore important to try and understand how these risk factors have impacted Helen to understand how to help best support her. Ongoing therapeutic support is in place for Helen.
- 14.4. The presenting needs of Helen and understanding around any serious harm she has suffered is limited and current multi-agency intervention is focused on reducing her distress and ensuring the relevant supports are in place, in a culturally sensitive manner that understands the complexity of her current perception and experiences of relationships

KLOE 3

What impacted the delay in Helen being formally assessed to be a child?

- 14.5. This review has considered that professionals and agencies did exhibit concern over the validity of the personal identification being presented in comparison to the appearance, behaviour and stature of Helen. Professional concerns regarding this issue were legitimately raised internally and safeguarding advice was sought. Many of the professionals who met Helen believed that she was a child.
- 14.6. What was evident within the Rapid Review meeting and RPE was that despite having these ongoing concerns between the period of Helen being seen at housing options and the PPP being obtained, further investigation into her age (other than reviewing the ID) did not progress. There was an over reliance upon the assurance that Helens ID stated she was an adult. The review has identified that professional curiosity was present but not effectively followed through, utilising the professional challenge and escalation policy. Although concerns continued to be raised, they were not escalated within any organisation. This was impacted by the assurance given from immigration services that the personal identification that Helen held was genuine and practitioners being unsure of where else they could have their concerns heard.

LEARNING POINT: Professional challenge and escalation of concerns in safeguarding should be adopted once local resolution has been unachievable between agencies.

⁵https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Harrowing_Journeys_Children_and_youth_on_the_move_across_the_Mediterranean.pdf

KLOE 4

Did agencies recognise that this was a child whom had potentially been trafficked into the UK?

- 14.7. Housing agencies did recognise that Helen was potentially a child trafficking victim, and this was evidenced by their attempt to contact the Modern Day Slavery helpline. However, there was an uncoordinated approach at the point of the concerns being raised with other agencies and the challenge of her presenting age was not adequately followed through in a timely manner through professional escalation processes.
- 14.8. It is also noted that although trafficking was considered for Helen at the initial point concerns were raised, when concerns were raised on 6th June 2019 that she was being taken to the 'shipping area' with men, although the safeguarding response of contacting GMP was appropriate, there is no evidence that Helen was considered to be a potential victim of adult trafficking. This is likely due to the fact that professionals were of the view she was a child, thus not leading them to consider the possibility of being a vulnerable adult.

KLOE 5

Are the pathways for managing cases of children and adults who have been potentially trafficked in place, transparent and embedded into local practice?

- 14.9. The Home Office⁶ provide guidance on the process to follow when a child claims asylum in the UK. Bolt (2018) reviewed Home Office data of asylum claims and noted that between July 2016 and June 2017 in approximately 1 in every 4 cases of children seeking asylum there was an age dispute. And of these cases, 65% were deemed to be adults posing as children. It is therefore well evidenced that adults seeking asylum will often seek asylum posing as unaccompanied asylum seeking children. There are systems and processes in place to manage this with the person treated as a child in the first instance until evidence or an age assessment concludes that they are not a child. In the case of Helen the processes around how to address a child presenting as an adult was missing and there was no clear protocol or pathway to follow.

LEARNING POINT: A clear multi agency pathway to respond to concerns regarding trafficking and/or disputes on the presenting age of an adult/child were not in place

⁶https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/825735/children_s-asylum-claims-v3.0ext.pdf

14.10. Since the review has taken place, an interim pathway has been developed and used in practice, resulting in a timely and appropriate response to age assessments progressing in similar circumstances. In all cases where there is professional concern that someone presenting as an adult is a child, the person will be seen by an age assessment trained social worker on the same day (EDT social worker if out of hours) and if required, consultation held with the police following this visit to plan a course of action.

KLOE 6

Understand why professional escalation was not fully utilised.

14.11. Professional challenge and escalation has an integral role to play in multi-agency safeguarding. Disagreement between agencies is inevitable and acceptable. The management of this, in order to provide resolution, has to be undertaken in a timely and prescribed manner. Housing agencies did try to raise their concerns by contacting external agencies and discussing their concerns internally with their safeguarding lead. Despite continued concerns, professional challenge and escalation processes were not implemented formally. For example, The Bridge were assured after the GMP investigation that Helen was an adult, no further contact with them occurred until the PPP and GMP referral on 21st June 2019. It was identified at RPE that this was impacted by the following factors:

- The professional challenge and escalation process was not embedded within the organisation/s raising concern that Helen was a child.
- Housing were not sure who to escalate the matter to as they received advice from a range of agencies and through their own safeguarding lead.
- No coordinated multi agency pathway was in place in order to respond to concerns where someone with an adult ID is presenting as a child.

KLOE 7

To ascertain whether the local actions arising from the joint case review (Child/Adult 15) were implemented and embedded across agencies.

14.12. Child/Adult 15 was a joint review undertaken on behalf of both Salford Safeguarding Children and Adults Boards in 2015. The case related to a victim of child trafficking from Pakistan into the UK for the purpose of domestic servitude and sexual exploitation.

- 14.13. She was trafficked into the UK in 2000 and although her passport had been legitimately issued, the year of birth specified was inaccurate and recorded as 1980. The reality is that she was probably born in or around 1990. She applied for and was accepted for a visa application as a domestic worker to work in a private household. She was residing as a child with personal identification presented to agencies as an adult, and this continued over a period of 9 years.
- 14.14. One of the key lines of enquiry that stemmed from the Rapid Review for Helen was to establish if the learning from Child/Adult 15 had been embedded. Key similarities in the cases have been noted and have been considered as part of this review.
- 14.15. In the case of Child/Adult 15 her abusers were used to speak for her including for the purpose of interpreting. She was rarely given the chance to speak to agencies alone and therefore her communication difficulties or her inability to speak English was unknown. Her voice was never heard.
- 14.16. In the case of Helen, at the point that the police attended in response to the concerns raised by Housing Options on the 29th May 2019, an interpreter was accessed at the first point of contact and she was spoken to alone in order to try and obtain her voice and to ensure she was heard. It has been acknowledged that the interpreter service could not provide someone with the exact dialect so there is the potential that some words did not translate exactly. However, use of an interpreter provided opportunity for any concerns of Helen to be raised. At this point and during subsequent discussions with the police and even after the point she was removed into the care of the Local Authority, Helen herself was given opportunities to ensure her voice was heard, utilising the interpreter service. She was complicit and maintained she was the age that her personal identification stated and that she was legitimately in the UK with her husband.
- 14.17. It was identified that when Helen was at the night shelter, interpreters were not accessed by the night shelter staff to speak with Helen.

It was the “persuasiveness” of the personal identification issued legitimately in the case of Child/Adult 15 that was an integral factor in the ability of her abusers to maintain the deception for 9 years. The fact that Child/Adult 15 had a genuine passport appeared to lead every agency and professional in contact with her to act without exhibiting any professional curiosity.

- 14.18. In the case of Helen it was evident after her entry into the UK and during the third point of contact with the Housing Options team that there were doubts over the validity of the recorded date of birth within her identification, as the housing officer viewed her to be a child. This led agencies and professionals to raise concerns with a range of statutory agencies including Children’s Social Care, Greater Manchester Police and Immigration services. Housing Options contacted a Modern-Day Slavery hotline for advice following their attendance at a recent training session. It appears

that professional curiosity was exhibited on a number of occasions with tenacity. The difficulty in this case was the fact that at every stage, agencies that were able to take further action, were 'assured' that the personal identification was valid. There was an integral gap in understanding that identification is not evidence based and is issued based on the information, in this case under the Family Reunion process, provided by Helen and her sponsor, Aaron. This essentially rendered any attempt to safeguard Helen via the 'usual' channels ineffective.

- 14.19. Professional curiosity was present and a number of professionals, at different times (housing association, housing provider and GMP officers) were in agreement that Helen was likely to be a child. Professional feedback at the RPE indicated that it felt that there was little more professionals could do to explore and/or act on this concern as the official advice from immigration was that the identification card was valid.
- 14.20. In the case of Child/Adult 15, the case review indicated that there had been a significant delay in identifying safeguarding concerns pertaining to trafficking. Trafficking was identified as a potential risk factor in this case providing assurance that lessons from Child/Adult 15 have been embedded across the locality.
- 14.21. In the case of Child/Adult 15 as she entered the UK in 2000, by the time the case review took place, a lot of changes to immigration processes had already taken place. That review predominantly relates to immigration rules surrounding the application for domestic visas however immigration changes were recognised within the case review as having the potential to hinder safeguarding processes. Specifically section 5.9 states that:-

"The "fingerprint enrolment process" is now a central part of the visa application process. The applicant provides biometric data (fingerprints and photograph) which are linked to the corresponding passport information. This is a process which is likely to make fraud more difficult, but in a case like Child/Adult 15 there is a danger that once her identity – including her false date of birth - was 'locked in', the fingerprint verification process used by all other ECOs, Border Force and Premium Services Officers would simply confirm the details were correct, potentially reinforcing the deception"

- 14.22. The predictions within the case of Child/Adult 15 have been evidenced within the case of Helen. The integral difference in the case of Helen however, is that agencies quickly recognised that she was potentially a child. It was the legitimately issued documentation that impacted the ability of agencies to move forward in their ability to safeguard Helen.
- 14.23. The case of Child/ Adult 15 spoke in detail about safeguarding responsibilities and obligations of the Home Office, including Border Force under Section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009. Within the RPE it was clarified that safeguarding training is undertaken with all of its member organisations including

ECO's and Visa Application Centres. Staff are not trained to a level of being able to undertake age assessments however any concerns would have been raised at the time if, during either of these processes, the validity of the age of Helen or the validity of the documentation came into question.

- 14.24. The integral personal and face to face contact with Helen that would have taken place with any specific degree of detail would have taken place at the VAC in the country of origin where Helen had been residing as a refugee. However, the final responsibility for identifying age related concerns rests with the decision maker, in this case UKVI Pretoria. It has been acknowledged that as Helen appears to be wearing a wig and make up in her photographic identification, this could have contributed to the deception when biometric data was being collated.
- 14.25. Since the rapid review took place, UK Visas & Immigration have taken a number of steps to address the learning, including updated training for immigration call centre staff regarding the evidence base of ID documentation, appointing a safeguarding lead within the organisation and looking at the possibility of introducing video interviews for family reunion applications, especially when there are anomalies and evidence does not corroborate

15. Conclusion

- 15.1. The review concludes that the concerns regarding Helens presenting age were consistently raised, and with various agencies and specialist call centres. The concerns were not effectively escalated via the professional challenge and escalation policy, impacting on delay of further age assessment progressing for Helen. There was an over reliance on the presenting ID of Helen, which was compounded by reassurance from immigration services that the identification of Helen was genuine.

Findings:

Evidence of good practice

- 15.2. There is evidence of good practice throughout the review period for Helen. Professional concern and curiosity was evidenced and appropriate contact made with the Bridge, GMP, the Modern Slavery Unit and Immigration.
- 15.3. Housing placed Helen in a provision with high monitoring as they continued to have concerns that she was a child and not an adult. Therefore they approached their decision making to consider the level of support and staff available to observe Helen and her relationship with Aaron.
- 15.4. Information sharing between housing and the housing provider is evidenced, which supported the ongoing understanding of the relationship between Aaron and Helen.

Learning Lessons:

- 15.5. The immigration processes for family reunions does not always produce evidenced based IDs. Therefore the true age, status and name of the person may not be accurate. Practitioners in the case of Helen were not aware that the presenting ID was not evidenced based.
- 15.6. There was a reliance on the presenting ID to validate Helen's age. Professional curiosity and/or escalation of concerns that she was a child were not swiftly followed through to further assessment or investigation.
- 15.7. It is important that professionals have access to the relevant professional advice in a timely manner, exhibit awareness by effective use of the escalation policy to enable a coordinated multi agency approach if someone is worried about a child.
- 15.8. A clear multi agency pathway to respond to concerns regarding trafficking and/or disputes on the presenting age of an adult/child were not in place. Specifically, the approach to age assessment when a professional has a concern that someone presenting as an adult may be a child.
- 15.9. Helens experience when Aaron was separated from her should be taken into consideration for future approaches to such circumstances, considering how the adult/child's views can be obtained and understood at all times. Allowing multi agency planning to be sensitive and responsive to their experience.

Recommendations:

- Salford Safeguarding Partnership to be assured that a local, multi agency, effective pathway is developed and embedded to address concerns that a presenting adult maybe a child and that the risk of trafficking may be present.
- Salford Safeguarding Partnership to be assured that all partners and practitioners are aware of the professional challenge and escalation process, when and how it should be used and to support the follow through of professional curiosity to an evidenced based outcome.
- Salford Safeguarding Partnership to be assured that all people within the city, working with adults and children are aware of the limitations of immigration ID and the pathway for raising concerns regarding age disputes and trafficking.
- UK Visas & Immigration to consider how they will review the newly implemented changes in light of the learning from this case to ensure safeguarding processes pertaining to the issue of identification are robust and embedded.
- UK Visas & Immigration to ensure advice is given to professionals and the public in respect of the evidence base of ID and what to do if someone with an Adult ID is

thought to be a child, therefore having a consistent approach nationally to directing the assessment of a child.

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