



**East Sussex  
Safeguarding  
Children  
Partnership**

# Child Y LCSPR Learning Briefing

## Introduction:

The East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (ESSCP) undertook a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPR) in 2021 regarding Child Y. This was the case of a primary school aged child who attempted to take their own life at the family home. Sixteen months earlier they had made allegations that a family member had sexually abused them. Although thankfully Child Y did not die or suffer serious physical injury as a result of their actions, the view of the police and the ambulance service was that this was 'a near miss'.

To protect the wellbeing of Child Y, the ESSCP will be publishing the report anonymously on the NSPCC's website. Whilst not containing specific details of the case, this briefing will set out the headline learning from this review.

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## Key learning:

The following learning points were identified in the Partnership Review process.

### 1) Communicating with the child

Although the attempt by a young child to end their own life is extreme and rare, the Child Y review identified the importance that adult assumptions are

### What is a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review?

A **Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR)** is a locally conducted multi-agency review in circumstances where a child has been abused or neglected, resulting in serious harm or death, and/or there is cause for concern as to the way in which agencies have worked together to safeguard the child.

The purpose of a review is to establish whether there are lessons to be learned about the way in which local professionals and agencies work together to safeguard children; identify what needs to be changed and, as a consequence, improve inter-agency working to better safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

not made about what the behaviour meant to the child, in the absence of speaking to the child directly.

The review found that the response by agencies to the suicide attempt, and of those involved in this LCSPR process, implied a simple 'cause and effect' relationship between the allegations of sexual abuse made by Child Y and their actions 16 months later.

Because of delays to planned therapeutic work with Child Y it was not known whether their disturbed presentation was directly related to their experience of sexual abuse or to other events going on in the

family at the time. Learning from this review has highlighted the need for there to be clarity about a plan to work together concerning how the child's needs are to be addressed during the time that they are awaiting a specialist assessment

**Learning point:** It is important to continue to communicate with children about their world. Professionals need to be reflective in the context of what may be a change in the child's priorities rather than adhere exclusively to an adult assumption of what the child requires.

## 2) Convening multi-agency meetings

As reflected in similar cases, it is very common for professionals to share a sense of anxiety about the safety of children in situations where there is a high level of concern about likely sexual abuse but very little by way of the firm evidence that is required to reach the threshold for intervention, either in civil or criminal proceedings.

In this case, professionals reflected there was a sense of 'stuckness' at not being able to move forward and there was a danger that this frustration could be projected as criticism by each agency for the others.

However, the LCSPR found there were a number of missed opportunities for practitioners to meet together to discuss their options in the developments in the life of the case.

**Learning Point:** There should be more judicious use of Care Planning Forums when there is lack of clarity about what the options are in reducing risk within families and to form a plan with a clear way forward that can be owned by all the relevant agencies

## 3) Improving practice and quality when undertaking ABE interviews

Achieving Best Evidence is an evidenced based approach to the interview process of child victims during a criminal investigation. In this LCSPR, several incidences were identified where the planning and process of the ABE interview could have been better.

**Learning Point:** There should be more effective planning, assessment and recording at all stages of the ABE process. This should involve:

- deciding whether a strategy discussion would assist future planning for how both the criminal investigation and safeguarding concerns proceed, especially if information shared at interview takes those concerns in a different direction
- the summary of the ABE interview report to be made and distributed to all relevant agencies as soon after the interview is conducted as possible

## 4) Building more effective relationships with the family

The Child Y case demonstrated how difficult it can sometimes be for practitioners to know how to work with families in which the children are affected by the emotional abuse/neglect of their carers.

The LCSPR reiterated understood best practice, that the quality of the relationship that can be established by professionals with the family helps create conditions where such challenging work has a better chance of being effective. Understanding by the practitioner of the client's experiences is a

significant component in creating such a relationship.

**Learning Point:** To be aware of the importance of emotional intelligence and empathy in strengthening trauma informed practice with clients to improve working relationships and promote the safeguarding of children.

## Recommendations:

The LCSPR identified three recommendations to strengthen safeguarding practice:

### Recommendation One

For agencies to highlight the learning from this review regarding;

- the importance of not making assumptions about the the source of a child's distress in the absence of speaking to the child directly.
- clarity about a plan to work together concerning how the child's needs are to be addressed during the time that they are awaiting a specialist assessment

### Recommendation Two

Partnership to ensure that procedures for convening multi-agency meetings are followed, to allow for clearer planning and communication between agencies. All relevant agencies, including specialist services are invited to contribute.

### Recommendation Three

ABE interviews should be carefully planned and appropriately documented, in line with expected good practice and guidance. All documentation arising from ABE interviews should be shared appropriately and in a timely manner. There should always be consideration as to whether a further

Strategy Meeting is required following the ABE interview

## Action taken since the review:

Since work on the LCSPR as started, the following has been completed:

- ✓ A working group has been set up within Children's Services to ensure better planning for ABE interviews and outcome sharing.
- ✓ There is a clear record of management escalation in SWIFT cases where there is disagreement between agencies.
- ✓ Involved schools have enhanced their safeguarding structures and systems.
- ✓ The SLES Safeguarding Team have developed an Advanced Training Programme for Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools, to include additional elements such as child sexual abuse, domestic abuse and neglect.

## Learning for practice:

The ESSCP invite you to discuss the issues raised in this LCSPR in your team meetings or during group supervision. We encourage your responses to be included in your team minutes and forwarded to the safeguarding lead within your organisation.

### Points for discussion:

- How do you ensure that the voice of the child is heard in the work you do with families?
- What therapeutic support is available to child victims?
- Think of a case that you felt was 'stuck' – what helped move the case on? What might your colleagues do?

- When did you last undertake training on child sexual abuse?
- When was the last time you used the Pan Sussex Child Protection and Procedures Manual?

## Useful Links:

### Pan Sussex Procedures

When was the last time you used the **Pan Sussex Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures?**

Did you know you can [sign up to alerts](#) for when the manual is updated.

### ESSCP Multi-agency Training

Currently all ESSCP training courses are running virtually, and we will update you on the [East Sussex Learning Portal](#) when these courses become available.

### Contacting the Single Point of Advice (SPoA)

Details on contacting SPoA can be found here:

[Contacting the Single Point of Advice \(SPoA\) | East Sussex County Council](#)

### ESSCP Contact

Details about the Partnership and its work can be found at [www.esscp.org.uk](http://www.esscp.org.uk). Follow the ESSCP on twitter for the latest safeguarding news in East Sussex [@EastSussexLCSB](#)

The ESSCP can be contacted on [ESSCP.Contact@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:ESSCP.Contact@eastsussex.gov.uk) or **01273 481544**