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Safeguarding in FIVE

Serious Case Review Child I

1. Background

- This Serious Case Review (SCR) was commissioned following the death of Child I from natural causes whilst in custody at a Young Offender Institution. At the time of his death, Child I was 16 years old and on remand for murder. He had a known history of carrying weapons and had been arrested several times in possession of Class A drugs. Over what was a relatively short period of time, Child I's offending escalated significantly. It was entrenched, serious and harmful.

2. Findings

- Practitioners not only need to recognise and respond to well-established 'critical moments', but 'subtle moments' too; moments that might present clear opportunities to help and protect a child. As an example, whilst in residential care Child I told staff that he didn't want his electronic tag to be removed. Not much weight was afforded to this comment at the time. In hindsight, this could have been a cry for help or a serious suggestion from Child I about how he might be kept safe.
- We know much about the circumstances in which the risk relating to exploitation, criminality and serious youth violence is predictably going to increase. Despite this knowledge, practice does not always accrue the benefits of a coherent multi-agency approach. Early intervention with Child I could have benefitted from improved coordination with a wider set of agencies (and the family) and might have helped more effectively address the causes of Child I's behaviour.
- Where children are identified as needing early help, it is important that parents and carers are helped to fully understand what this involves in respect of a coordinated, multi-agency approach to help and protection. Without this understanding, they may be hindered in their ability to provide informed consent.

3. Recommendations

Safeguarding partners should:

- seek reassurance that policy, procedure and practice relating to critical moments (both well established and those less obvious) is sufficiently robust to ensure effective safety planning.
- seek reassurance from the Police about the sufficiency or otherwise of local disruption activity targeting those who are criminally exploiting children.
- work with primary and secondary schools to ensure that they are able to identify children who show persistent behavioural difficulties. On identification, the partnership's early help response should be robust and seek to mitigate known or possible safeguarding threats.
- ensure that a multi-agency response to the persistent disruptive behaviour of children is sufficiently described in the threshold tools of both Hackney and the City of London.
- explore (operating within the current law and guidance concerning exclusions) with both primary and secondary schools how multi-agency involvement could be improved both prior to and at the point decisions are being made about permanent exclusions.
- ensure that local threshold tools, associated guidance and multi-agency training set out clear practice expectations about seeking consent. These should include guidance for staff on how to respond when consent is not given in circumstances where there are concerns about actual or potential risk.
- ensure that the multi-agency arrangements for early help are underpinned by a defined strategy, clear processes and communication material to help practitioners explain the offer available to families in Hackney.



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4. Reflections

- Consider the lessons from this review, discuss them in your team and identify ways you can improve your own safeguarding practice.
- For many children, the boundary between 'victim' and 'offender' will often be blurred. Front-line professionals need to recognise this and give sufficient priority to both areas as part of their practice. Put simply, when offending is driven by exploitation, one won't be addressed without the other.
- When it comes to safeguarding children and young people, standing still is falling behind. For all practitioners, keep your training up-to-date. Book on the CHSCP's basic safeguarding training / attend a refresher session, or book onto a range of thematic sessions including an 'Introduction to Contextual Safeguarding' and 'An Introduction to Adultification'.

5. Further Learning

- Read the full report on the CHSCP website [HERE](#).
- View the upcoming programme of multi-agency safeguarding training [HERE](#).
- Visit the [Practice Guidance](#) section of the CHSCP website (Exploitation & Adolescent Safeguarding; Professionals' Meetings Guidance).
- Sign up to the [Things You Should Know](#) briefing to keep up to date on safeguarding news and training.

