



# Learning and Improvement Briefing 9

## Findings from Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) multi-agency case audits

### Messages for practice

January 2017

The quality and performance sub group of SSCB leads on the planning and completion of multi-agency case audits with partner agencies as part of the performance assurance framework. The audits provide essential qualitative findings, to promote continuous improvement in practice and processes to safeguard children, that complement the performance data received by the SSCB.

#### The audits

**May 2016:** Case Audit of children subject to child protection plans due to neglect. The audit focused on compliance with procedures in relation to inter-agency working and shared assessment, planning, intervention and review systems.

**September 2016:** case audit focusing on the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for children and young people living with domestic abuse.

**November 2016:** case audit focusing on multi-agency effectiveness across core group activity, compliance with multi-agency procedures, information sharing and planning for children and young people.



## The findings

### Childhood neglect:

- Professionals were not always addressing issues of neglect promptly and purposefully with parents.
- The focus was more on the adult than the child.
- A lot of agencies said they would not use the Neglect tool; they would refer to Social Care.
- The audit showed that Neglect is a really difficult area to get right.
- The agency practice was inconsistent.
- Core group evidence concluded that the agencies were not focusing on the child.
- There were significant training needs

### Domestic Abuse:

- Agencies not routinely using the available screening/ assessment tools.
- Use of troubled families support for some families was not being fully explored when families are experiencing domestic violence.
- GPs are not currently receiving any information from Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) or receiving any minutes from Child Protection conferences.
- Missing opportunities to understand the experiences of children with disabilities.
- The 'step down' and early help arrangements were not clear in terms of lead professionals and meetings.
- Where there were concerns about substance use, it was not clear if/how professionals were linking with or referring to the Shropshire Recovery Partnership.
- The general understanding of MARAC arrangements was limited.
- The continuing lack of voluntary perpetrator programmes (although there is some support for the victims of domestic abuse).
- Some strategy meetings identified in this audit had limited professional involvement.



### **Core groups:**

- Minutes of core group meetings not always available.
- Core group agenda and child's plan not always addressed and followed at meetings.
- The main responsibility is placed on Social Workers to chair, minute and arrange for distribution of minutes of core group meetings, rather than a shared multi-agency responsibility.
- The need to engage relevant males and other people in the household in core groups and plans.

### **Positive findings:**

There were positive findings and good practice across the audits:

- There was evidence of agencies putting in significant time and energy in to working with families where childhood neglect was identified.
- Good multi-agency working, information sharing and planning was evident in some cases audited. This needed to be consistent across all practice.
- Adult mental health has a single assessment pathway that includes a section on the child and how the child may be affected when one or more carers has mental health issues.
- The audits found that there was a good understanding across partner agencies when domestic abuse was an issue.
- There was good use of the CADDAs-DASH risk identification check list by the police in domestic abuse cases and this was shared with partner agencies.
- The majority of core groups are taking place within prescribed timescales.
- There was good evidence of the child's needs being considered at core groups, but this needs to lead to better child outcome focused plans.



## Actions and learning

### Childhood Neglect:

- A multi-agency working group has revised the SSCB Childhood Neglect Strategy. This was launched at the SSCB conference held on 10/11/16
- SSCB Annual Multi Agency Conference highlighting childhood neglect: *“Considering the lived experience of the child, and how to assess and identify strengths, difficulties and areas for intervention with families”*. The Graded Care Profile 2 assessment Tool was also launched at this conference.
- Implementation of the Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2), an evidence based assessment tool to be used with families where there's a concern about child neglect – whether that's a small concern, or a case where a child or young person is already subject to a child protection plan. There is a SSCB training programme for professionals working with families to be accredited users of the GCP2. For more information about this training go to: [http://www.safeguardingshropshireschildren.org.uk/scb/prof\\_training.html](http://www.safeguardingshropshireschildren.org.uk/scb/prof_training.html)

### Domestic Abuse:

- From these findings and other data, the SSCB will report to the Domestic Abuse Forum to inform the review of Shropshire's Domestic Abuse Strategy.
- The SSCB will ensure that Domestic abuse risk assessment tools used in Shropshire are referenced in Domestic Abuse training.
- We need to continue to promote the early help offer in Shropshire and the development of the new recording system Empowering Communities Inclusion and Neighbourhood Management System (ECINS) launched in April 2016. There is a section on the Early Help website for professionals <http://new.shropshire.gov.uk/early-help/practitioners/> with information about Forms to use; Strengthening Families; ECINs and other topics. Step down meetings and clear minutes are being promoted in the delivery of early help services.
- Shropshire Recovery Partnership have linked with [Compass](#) , the single point of contact for receiving new enquiries regarding concerns for the welfare or protection of children and young people in Shropshire, to advise on how to access their services.
- Children's Social Care are conducting a single agency audit of strategy meetings and will report findings back to SSCB.



## Core Groups

- All core group meetings should follow the set agenda and minutes of the meeting should reflect this, including recording core group membership and attendance
- The child's plan should be considered at every meeting. Progress for the child against the plan should be noted and any updates to the plan recorded.
- Participants should be fully prepared for core groups, ensuring there is a copy of the child's plan, and reporting on any actions that are identified in the plan.
- Participants should fully support the core group process. This includes ensuring the core group meeting takes place, even if there are some absences of professionals; supporting the core group by agreeing to record the minutes or chairing the meeting.
- The multi-agency safeguarding training that includes core groups will be reviewed to include the findings and messages from the audit.

## For discussion at staff meetings:

In your groups and teams, or in supervision, use the questions below to help challenge your own practice.

- When we have concerns about domestic abuse how do we assess the level of abuse and concerns?
- Do we know who to contact/ refer to if we have concerns about drug and alcohol use
- How do we assess the level and nature of childhood neglect? Are we aware of the training available on the use of the Graded Care Profile?
- How well prepared are we for core group meetings in terms of knowing the child's plan and reporting to the meeting?
- How can we support effective core group meetings?



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## What's New?

The What's New page of the SSCB website

[http://www.safeguardingshropshireschildren.org.uk/scb/home\\_whats\\_new.html](http://www.safeguardingshropshireschildren.org.uk/scb/home_whats_new.html) gives a summary of new and updated procedures, guidance and information on the Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board website, including relevant news and events in Shropshire. Some of the most recent updates are below

- The Self-Harm Policy & Guidelines, which provides information and advice for practitioners, including risk assessment tools and care pathway. This will be uploaded onto the Child Protection Procedures at the next update.  
[Self Harm Policy & Guidance Revised Nov 2016](#)
- New Pre-birth assessment policy & guidance This guidance is for all professionals involved with families prior to birth. It is of particular relevance to those involved in conducting pre-birth assessments. The guidance is intended to inform timely and clear planning and assessment where parent(s) are engaged and supported throughout the ante-natal period and immediately after birth. Identifying the needs of and potential risks to the unborn child at the earliest possible stage reducing the likelihood of last minute intervention around the time of birth.  
[Pre birth assessment policy & guidance Dec 2016](#)
- Updated Resolution Escalation Policy. Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board and all partner agencies are committed to open and transparent joint working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Raising questions, challenging, and escalating concerns where appropriate, quickly and clearly, is seen as a positive approach to practice and continuing improvement in how we protect and meet the needs of children in Shropshire. In order to support the positive use of escalation through open communication SSCB have developed this stage by stage guidance and flow chart attached  
[Resolution Escalation Policy Nov 2016](#)



- The updated West Mercia Consortium Inter Agency Child Protection Procedures Manual is now online  
[West Mercia Consortium Inter Agency Child Protection Procedures Manual](#)